■ Across / A15
Ex-congressman's warehouse yields illegally cut lumber in Quezon

■ News / A7
Aklanons want ABS-CBN apology for reporting killings happened inside church

■ Metro / A19
Structures in Pasig market demolished by firm owned by DA Secretary Yap

■ News / A7
GMA to revamp Poro Point board, Chavit pals included

■ Entertainment / A25
Starlets' lack of schooling makes them shallow, silly, stupid

Ex-PEA exec faces graft rap over 'Road to Perdition' scam

By Philip C. Tubeza

WILL a big fish finally be caught?

More than two years after President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the abolition of the controversial Public Estates Authority (PEA) after its top officials were accused of allegedly overpricing a 5.1-km asphalt road named af-

EX-PEA/ A18

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Like show biz, AFP, PNP star-studded, says solon

By Cynthia C. Balana

ALL-STAR CAST SILA!

LIKE show business, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police are studded with "stars" except that in the latter case

LIKE/ A18

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

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RP No. 2 on corruption list

ADB survey covered 800 firms in 2003

By Doris C. Dumlao
Business

THE PHILIPPINES is paying a high price for its failure to curb "systemic" and "widespread" corruption.

A study conducted by the Asian Development Bank showed that the Philippines ranked second to Bangladesh among 102 countries in terms of the magnitude of irregular payments, including bribery, in public contracts.

Corruption affected 34 percent of domestic enterprises, resulting in the retardation of revenues and labor productivity, said the survey report which the Manila-based bank released yesterday.

The report, "Improving the Investment Climate in the Philippines," was the result of a survey of 800 companies covering food and food processing, garments, textiles and electronics carried out in 2003 in collaboration with the World Bank.

The ADB used the ranking on several key indicators under the latest world competitiveness report. Aside from irregularities in public contracts, among other indicators of corruption used were irregularities in tax payments and the business cost of corruption.

Corruption ranked second among the key concerns—the first being macro-economic instability and the third poor infrastructure—cited as impeding foreign investment and growth

RP NO. 2/ A18

Much of world thinks Bush is dangerous, but not in RP

LONDON—A wide majority of people questioned in a BBC World Service global opinion poll published Wednesday believe that US President George W. Bush has made the world more dangerous.

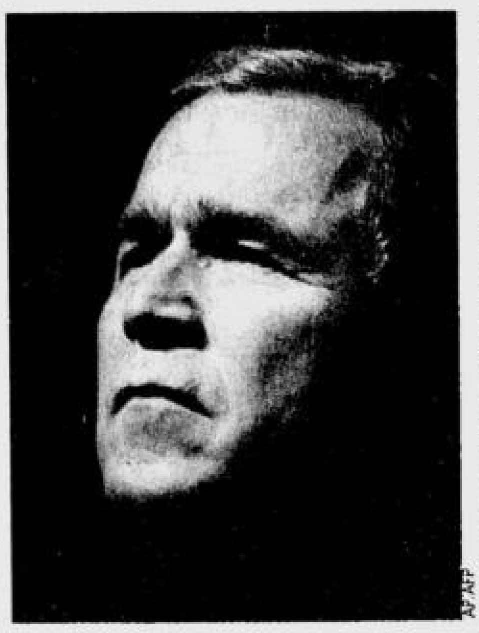
On average across all countries, the BBC poll indicated that 58 percent of people believe Bush's reelection has made the world more dangerous. Only in three countries, Poland, India and the Philippines, was there a majority of support for Bush.

Almost half of the nearly 21,000 people in 21 countries who responded to the poll also made no distinction between the Bush administration and America itself. They saw US influence in the world as largely negative and viewed Americans negatively as well.

In none of the countries polled was there support for contributing troops to Iraq.

"Negative feelings about Bush are high and are generalizing to the American people who reelected him," said Steven Kull, director of the Program on International Policy Attitudes at the University of Maryland, which carried out the poll in collaboration with the international polling com-

MUCH/ A6



AP/AFP

JUST DESSERTS: Overlooking the inaugural parade route in Washington, DC, the Williard Intercontinental Hotel is dishing up chocolate goodies to honor President George W. Bush such as cowboy boots and a yellow rose as intimations of his Texas roots and the presidential seal. (At left) At a pre-inaugural to-do on Tuesday, Bush listens intently to his father, former President George H. Bush tell his story about his military service.

Collect more, reap reward, or you are fired

By Carlito Pablo, Christine Avendaño and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

COLLECT more and get a reward. Collect less and you're fired.

This is the essence of the consolidated lateral attrition bill covering officials and employees of the internal revenue and customs bureaus which was finally ratified last night by Congress, soon after it was approved by a congressional bicameral conference committee.

The conference committee was finally able to reconcile the Senate and House versions of the measure that aims to provide a reward and penalty system for revenue-collecting agencies of government.

COLLECT/ A18

Food, not belt-tightening, feeds country's poor

MALACAÑANG is flashing "false hopes" that fewer people are hungry now, according to a leading environmentalist.

Odette Alcantara, whose campaigns include the promotion of backyard vegetable farming, yesterday said she was taken aback by the spin on the survey of the Social Weather Stations.

The survey conducted during the fourth quarter of last year found that fewer Filipino families went hungry and reported themselves poor, but mainly because they lowered their living standards and observed more belt-tightening measures.

"Since when did belt-tightening become the answer to hunger? The answer is still [to have more] food," Alcantara told the INQUIRER.

Alcantara also wondered aloud what certain government agencies, like the National Anti-Poverty Commission, was doing to alleviate hunger aside from fostering what she called "a soup-kitchen,

FOOD/ A6

Let them eat weeds, grass, ferns, leaves

By Volt Contreras

AS THE poor's hunger pangs become a staple subject of opinion polls, a recently launched cookbook makes a timely assertion: Filipinos cannot starve since hearty dishes can be had from plants that farmers ignore and gardeners loathe.

The authors of "Oops...Don't Throw Those Weeds Away!" insist that the country is endowed with wild grass, weeds, ferns or tree leaves that are as edible as the veggies sold in the markets.

Most of the recipes are courtesy of Maur Lichauco, a cooking teacher with foreign training and sister of the late senator Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino. She was "challenged by the idea of turning weeds and common plants into delicious dishes," the book said.

Nearly everything that grows on

LET THEM/ A6

FLASHBACK TO EDSA II

Marine group set to desert Erap 3 days ahead of Reyes

By Fe Zamora

THREE days before then Armed Forces chief Gen. Angelo Reyes withdrew support from then President Joseph Estrada, a group of Marines was already holed up at the Ultra in Pasig City, ready to "break away" from the Estrada administration.

It was not a big group, "just about 130 men," according to Lt. Gen. Edgardo Espinosa, who would have stood as its leader. "But it was just the reserve group. There were also the regulars. They were just waiting for the go-signal," he said.

The Marines had come from various camps.

"They left the camps in civilian clothes, but they brought their guns. The Ultra was the assembly point. At the given signal, they were to change into their uniforms, bring out their guns, and march to Edsa," Espinosa said in an interview on March 6, 2001.

He added: "Our plan was to withdraw support from Erap and install Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as President. We did not plan a junta; we would have fought anyone who planned to set up a junta."

Had the plan pushed through, Reyes, then perceived as "inclined to support Estrada," would have been "isolated" and logically ousted from his post along with the Commander in chief, as had happened to Ferdinand Marcos and

MARINE/ A6

Building and Reorga
PartidoLiberal

JOAN BONDOC

THE LIBERALS PARTY. The Liberal Party celebrates its founding by President Manuel Roxas 59 years ago on Wednesday. From left: former Sen. Wigberto Tañada; Sen.Francis Pangilinan, LP vice chair; Senate President Franklin Drilon, LP president; Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, Sen. Mar Roxas, LP vice president for policy, platform and advocacy and Rep. Benigno Aquino III. *(Story on Page A3)*

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern and Eastern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/01/20/05

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Suspect in Cavite killings hunted

By Marlon Ramos
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

POLICE are now hunting a man suspected of killing three of his neighbors Tuesday night in Indang, Cavite, after an argument over the family letting dirty water flow into his yard.

The suspect, Frederico Rupido, shot dead his neighbor, Doroteo Diate, 42; his wife Catalina, 42; their 13-year-old son Marvin and wounded another son, Mark Oliver, inside the Diate home in Barangay Banaba Cerca at around 10 p.m.

The suspect, who used an assault rifle, is considered armed and dangerous and lawmen are authorized to shoot him if needed, said Cavite police director Senior Supt. Roberto Rosales.

Chief Insp. Ramil Montilla, Indang police chief, said three hours before the incident, victims Catalina and son Marvin had a heated argument with the suspect, who berated them for parking and washing Doroteo's bus along the roadside.

Montilla, quoting witnesses, said Rupido got angry with the victims because the water coming from the bus overflowed to the front gate of a neighbor's house where the suspect was attending a wake and having a drinking session with some residents.

After an exchange of words with the victims, an intoxicated Rupido allegedly hit Marvin on the head and kicked Catalina, Montilla told the INQUIRER in a phone interview. Catalina then grabbed a steel pipe and struck Rupido in retaliation.

But after some neighbors interceded, the two sides settled the matter at the barangay hall.

Instead of going home, however, Rupido joined his drinking buddies, who heard him say that he will "kill Catalina and her family members," Rosales said.

Moments later, Rupido left and when he came back, he was armed with an Armalite rifle.

Montilla said Rupido went straight to the victims' house and forcibly opened the door by kicking it. Once inside the house, the suspect opened fire at the victims, according to Catalina's sister, Manuela Lucero, who witnessed the gruesome killing.

The victims were watching television when Rupido shot them dead, the police said.

Lucero later told investigators that she escaped the shooting after she ran away together with Mark Oliver and her sister's two other children, Casey and Christine Joy. Mark Oliver was seriously injured and was brought to the Philippine General Hospital for treatment.

Police recovered from the crime scene 19 empty shells from a 5.56 caliber Armalite rifle. They are also checking if Rupido's Armalite is licensed.

According to Montilla, the police are keeping a close watch on the area to prevent another bloody episode stemming from the shooting. Several police units have been deployed since last night to the victims' and suspect's house.

"We definitely don't want another bloodshed because relatives of the victims might get back at Rupido's family," he said.

Montilla said the suspect's wife told them that she had yet to see her husband after he left the house early Tuesday afternoon.

The incident was the second in Cavite this month after warring clans engaged in a shooting spree that left five people dead. *AFP*

'Ukay-ukay' blamed for meningo spread

By Marlon Ramos
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LOS BAÑOS, Laguna—Watch out "ukay-ukay" (used clothes) lovers.

An anatomy and zoology professor from the University of the Philippines in Los Baños is blaming these imported used clothes from the US and Europe as the culprit for the spread of the deadly meningococcemia that hit Baguio City recently.

Nineteen out of 25 patients infected with the bacteria have died of meningococcemia since 2004, according to a report by the regional office of the World Health Organization. Most of these cases were reported in Baguio City, now known as the country's *ukay-ukay* capital.

Pedro Alviola III, an associate professor at the Animal Biology Division in UPLB, said the spread of meningococcemia was unusual in a tropical country like the Philippines since the pathogenic bacteria of the disease, known as neisseria meningitides, only thrives in temperate places and cold regions.

"There's no other way for this disease to enter the country [but through the used clothes] which came mostly from the US and Europe," said Alviola, who is finishing his doctorate degree in Zoology at a university in Malaysia.

Alviola admitted that his conclusion was not based on any scientific study though he said that it was easy to suspect the *ukay-ukay* items. "You see, the 'ground zero' of the disease is the Baguio public market where many of these *ukay-ukay* stalls are located. And we know that the climate in Baguio, especially nowadays, is almost the same as that of in temperate countries."

Saving the seahorse from pet shops, Viagra set

HANDUMON, Bohol—Nights spell danger for the tiny seahorse, the colorful but naive denizen of the Philippines' coral reefs.

Here on the southern edge of Danajon Bank, fishermen dragging tiny boats lit with gas-fed lamps wade through the mangrove-shrouded coast into the shallows hunting for the exotic fish whose camouflage is easily exposed by the light.

The lantern boats are the basic infrastructure of a multimillion-dollar global trade in seahorses, which end up in curio shops or aquariums across Europe and North America.

But most are dried and powdered as an organic Viagra or impotence cure for the booming traditional Chinese medicine market.

While humans do not eat seahorse, its gradual disappearance has mirrored the degradation of the Danajon Bank, the only double-barrier coral reef in Southeast Asia and a key sanctuary of the species.

'Indicator species'

"Seahorses are indicator species," said Allen Mondido of Project Seahorse, an international marine conservation campaign that has adopted the uniquely shaped fish, genus Hippocampus, as its "flagship species."

"Their habitats are mangroves, coral reefs and kelp forests. When the population of the species exhibits a sharp drop, it means the resource has been degraded," the 31-year-old Mondido said during a visit to the group's field office on the tiny island of Jandayan in Bohol.

Danajon Bank, which borders the major islands of Bohol, Cebu and Leyte, has suffered from destructive fishing practices like using dynamite or cyanide to stun the fish, or the use of chemicals to wash seaweeds used for the food-binder industry, Mondido said.

Holger Horn, a German marine conservationist based in the tourist island of Panglao of Bohol, said the idea of conservation remained an "alien" term to many of the millions of Filipinos who depend on the sea for a living.

"You are dealing here with people who spend between one and three years in elementary school, and sometimes they don't even know how to write properly," he said.

But even the well-off, educated scuba divers from northeast Asia tend to take trophies when they visit reef formations in the Philippines, a practice that conservationists are trying to discourage, Horn added.

The residents of Handumon, a major seahorse fishing village, keep the fish alive in tanks or leave them outside to dry in the sun for two days. Buyers visit regularly to supply the big exporters in Cebu City, a short boat ride from here.

A kilogram of dried seahorse fetches about P3,500. Live seahorse is sold for just P10 apiece, Mondido said.

Project Seahorse says the global seahorse trade reached about 70 million tons, or about 25 million fish in 2001.

The Philippines, along with India, Thailand and Vietnam are the largest known exporters.

Accidental catching by trawlers in search of other fish is also a problem. The populations of some of the seven known species of seahorse in the Philippines are understood to have fallen by up to 70 percent in the 10 years to 1995.

All 34 known seahorse species worldwide are now on the so-called "Red List of Threatened Animals" of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

Endangered species

In 2002 the seahorse trade was regulated by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Mondido, who has a university degree in community development, arrived on Handumon three years ago to help save the seahorse. The project persuaded the small-scale fishermen to trade only in seahorses bigger than 10 centimeters.

The village association also guards and maintains three marine sanctuaries around Jandayan island, including mangrove forests which had previously been exploited for firewood and construction. Other areas of Danajon Bank are following its lead.

"If you concentrate on just one species and allow the over-exploitation of other species, you end up achieving nothing," said Mondido.

Tying up with the local communities and local governments, Project Seahorse and other marine conservation outfits in the Danajon Bank are retraining residents in other jobs.

In Handumon, a primitive community of about 5,000 people who make do without electricity, this means raising free-range chickens and producing handicrafts using local non-marine resources.

Selling the idea of marine conservation "is very difficult," Mondido said. "There are no shortcuts."

Once the villagers are won over, the next challenge is to sustain their enthusiasm so it becomes self-financing and the fishermen do not revert to their old, destructive practices once donor funds run out. *AFP*

Noli confident poll win will be upheld

VICE President Noli de Castro yesterday voiced confidence that his victory over former Sen. Loren Legarda would eventually be affirmed despite a ruling by the Presidential Electoral Tribunal junking his petition to dismiss Legarda's election protest.

"At the end of these proceedings, we are very confident that it will be clearly shown that the Vice President won the 2004 elections by even a wider margin," De Castro's lawyer Armando Marcelo said in a statement.

"But we have to await the ruling of the Supreme Court, sitting as the Presidential Electoral Tribunal, on the further proceeding of the case."

Marcelo said the Vice President intended to file a motion for reconsideration to clarify the issue of "how the recount of the ballots and the use of related election paraphernalia" would be done.

The PET ruled on Tuesday that Legarda's election protest was "sufficient in form and substantially serious enough on its face" to pose a challenge to the validity of De Castro's title.

The PET, composed of Supreme Court justices, then ordered Congress and election officers to ensure the integrity of the questioned election returns and other election documents in preparation for their transfer to the tribunal.

The tribunal, however, stressed that the veracity of Legarda's allegations, while serious, had yet to be proved.

De Castro said he welcomed the PET's adverse ruling on his petition, curtly saying "I firmly believe in the rule of law and in constitutional processes."

He would abide by the continuation of the proceedings since "he strongly advocates the determination of truth and the people's will in the electoral process," his lawyer said in the statement.

Legarda had alleged that she was cheated, through vote-padding and shaving, in the election returns from 9,007 precincts in six provinces, one city and five municipalities, and in the ballot results from 124,404 precincts in 44 cities and provinces.

The results, she said, had been "altered, distorted and manipulated" during their transfer from the election returns to the statements of votes by precinct, "and/or the subsequent transfer to the municipal, city certificate of canvass; and then from the municipal/city COCs to the SOVs by municipality."

The court dismissed De Castro's argument that the tribunal had no jurisdiction over the case and that Legarda's protest was a petition for the declaration of a failure of elections.

Joker: We're in semi-paralysis

MAVERICK Sen. Joker Arroyo yesterday conceded that the country was in a state of "semi-paralysis" because the government was now being run by credit rating agencies.

"It's about time we wake up, take stock of ourselves, look at the mirror and say, the Philippines does not exist for Moody and company, it exists for the Filipinos. We have to shed this inferiority complex," said the senator.

Arroyo said that legislative processes in Congress were no longer guided by "what the Filipino needs" but by the "requirements of Moody and company," referring to the global credit rating firms Moody's Investors Service, Standard and Poor's and Fitch.

Recently, S&P downgraded the country's credit rating, citing its inability to perk up the economy with new revenue measures.

Arroyo said that in passing the tax measures espoused by Malacañang, "Congress has abdicated its constitutional primacy to lay down policy on economic matters and it has yielded that to Moody and company."

In fact, he concluded, "these three credit rating agencies practically ran the country," with the government supposedly unable to make any move without first thinking about how the three would react.

He said that in the past, the country was subservient to the whims of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

"But at least we owe them money. In the case of the rating agencies, we don't owe them anything, and yet officialdom and private business tremble with fear before these faceless agencies."

KARANGALAN
2005

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Sheila Coronel, Ramon Magsaysay Awardee 2003
Tony Tan Caktiong, World Entrepreneur of the Year 2004
Chin Chin Gutierrez, Time Magazine 2003 Asian Hero and TOWNS 2004
Von Hernandez, Goldman Environmental Prize 2003
Nes Jardin, President, Cultural Center of the Philippines
Sr. Mary John Mananzan, Asian Public Intellectual Awardee
Nicanor Perlas, Right Livelihood Award 2003
Jess Robredo, Ramon Magsaysay Award 2000
Miriam Katighak, Urban Land Institute Award for Excellence 2003
PNOC Solar Project Team, Energy Globe World Award for Sustainability 2003

ARTISTIC GROUPS AND ARTISTS:
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Madrigal Singers, winner of numerous global gold awards
Dagway Sigmahanon, Galing Pook Awardee
Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra with Eugene Castillo
Grace Nono, TOWNS awardee
Bayang Barrios, Winner, National Song Festival
John Arcilla, Best Actor, Manila Film Festival
and many others!

There will also be a performance of the Hudhud Epic, one of UNESCO's 19 masterpieces of oral literature and a showing of the film, "Magnifico", winner of 56 awards including the Grand Prize Winner at the International Film Festival in Berlin. Maryo de los Reyes, film director of Magnifico will share his insights with the audience

Ces Drilon, ABS-CBN business news anchor and TOWNS 2004 Awardee will co-emcee the event with Nicanor Perlas.

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LP won't back Salonga on GMA impeachment

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE PARTY of former Sen. Jovito Salonga is not keen on supporting his proposition that President Macapagal-Arroyo should be impeached for allowing her predecessor, Joseph Estrada, to seek medical treatment in Hong Kong.

During the party's 59th anniversary celebration yesterday at Club Filipino, Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan told the INQUIRER that the LP had no official stand on the issue.

Salonga and former President Corazon Aquino, who was also invited to the occasion, did not show up.

"First and foremost, we have no official party stand. We have not discussed it in our meetings," said Pangilinan, LP vice chair and one of the leaders of the 14-man administration bloc in the Senate.

As chair emeritus of the party, Salonga "has not made any representation with the party for us to tackle it," said the senator.

Second, on the issue of constitutional processes, "the impeachment complaint would have to emanate from the House," he said, adding "as a senator, I would rather withhold comment on the matter until the same is taken up assuming it is in the House."

Pangilinan also refused to comment on the grounds cited by Salonga in calling for Ms Arroyo's impeachment.

"If there was interference by the executive department in the Sandiganbayan's decision, then that violates separation of powers. But that again is a question of evidence," said Pangilinan.

Sen. Mar Roxas, the party's vice president for policy, platform and advocacy, was more forthright in saying that Salonga's contention was done in his capacity as KilosBayan head.

No damage done

"So it's a different organization from the Liberal Party. Frankly, there's been no discussion of it within the party," said Roxas.

"I myself saw the President's action as one humanitarian gesture. And since (former) President Estrada is back in the country, back in the custody of the authorities, then it caused really no harm, no damage done," said Roxas who was not convinced that the impeachment ground was "actionable."

"But that's why you call us Liberals, everybody has his own view," he curtly added.

The LP has 33 members in the House of Representatives led by Tarlac Rep. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III.

Dominant

But this early, the LP was consolidating political forces to come up with a formidable ticket in the 2010 national and local elections.

So far, LP has five members eyeing the Senate in 2007—Pangilinan (reelectionist), Noynoy Aquino, Florencio "Butch" Abad, Environment Secretary Mike Defensor and Manila Mayor Lito Atienza.

During the anniversary celebration, Senate President Franklin Drilon, LP president, vowed that the LP would be the "dominant party" come 2010.

"If other parties are making headlines because of some political gimmicks, the Liberal Party must make history because of its principles and unrelenting defense of democracy," he said.

Asked about Roxas leading LP in the 2010 presidential race, Drilon said: "We do not want to blow our horn but I think our people can see that we have a very credible party."

Roxas himself was evasive, saying "everyone can run for president."

Pangilinan was also mum over rumors that he would run as vice president, saying "it's too early to talk about politics."

Drilon said 2010 was "too far off."

"We will just continue to build our party. I think we have a pretty good foothold insofar as the legislative branch is concerned. We have 33 congressmen, 4 senators, 3 Cabinet members, 13 governors, 6 city mayors.

There are now a total of 1,500 LP members in elective positions," said Drilon.

Long way

Drilon said the party founded on Jan. 19, 1946 by former President Manuel Roxas, had come a long way, producing three Presidents: Roxas, Elpidio Quirino and Diosdado Macapagal.

Party members figured prominently in our country's political history such as Senators Ninoy Aquino, Gerry Roxas and Salonga, Gov. Evelio Javier and Mayor Cesar Climaco.

"We can proudly say that in the midst of political opportunism, the Liberal Party never lost its moral compass and ideological moorings, never wavered in its ideals and never compromised its values. We seek to be a party of conviction not of convenience," Drilon added.

Embattled entertainers take case to Congress

By Carlito Pablo

EDNA Sta. Clara, 28, shares every showgirl's nightmare of growing old, wrinkled and unfit to sashay on the stage.

According to Sta. Clara, a dancer, this sad prospect is what she and other Filipina entertainers in Japan are staring at while waiting for new visas which will be harder to come by because of stricter immigration rules imposed by Tokyo beginning today.

"*Lola na ko nun* (I would be a grandmother when that visa arrives)," said Sta. Clara, her long black hair flowing into her trim body hugged by a white shirt and tight jeans.

Called the Anti-Human Trafficking Plan, the new policy hopes to address the growing human trafficking confronting Japan today.

Sta. Clara and dozens of entertainers on Monday trooped to the House of Representatives to seek congressional assistance for their plight.

Under the new regulations, Japan will no longer recognize the Artist Accreditation Certificate issued by the Philippine government as basis for the issuance of entertainer visas.

In lieu of the AAC, Japanese immigration authorities will require entertainers to show proof of two years formal training at an educational institute relevant to a performance trade or two years experience outside Japan.

From 80,000 visas yearly, Japan will be cutting down visa releases to only 8,000 with the implementation of the new policy. This could affect some 200,000 Filipino workers, a huge number of whom are in the entertainment industry.

Sta. Clara said she had been performing in Japan for two and a half years. Recently her visa expired and she is now waiting for a new one.

Asked if her employment before in Japan as a dancer had been a productive one, Sta. Clara said: "Of course."

Sta. Clara and company found a sympathetic ear in party-list Rep. Florencio "Bem" Noel (An Waray), who delivered a privilege speech on their behalf.

"Congress needs to prod and prod strongly the administration to make badly needed representations and the needed request (to delay implementation of the new policy)," Noel said in a speech.

Noel said Japan was a staunch ally of the country and will "not easily rebuff a reasonable request to hold off legislation that can create economic havoc of tsunami force on the Philippine economy."

Citing records from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, Noel said Japan was the third largest source of foreign exchange remittances from Filipinos abroad. In 2004 alone, he said, money sent by Filipino workers from Japan reached $258.26 million.

"There is a real possibility that the Philippine banking system would immediately lose over $20 million in foreign exchange should Japanese promoters close their businesses and withdraw their $20,000 escrow deposit in local banks as required by Philippine regulations," Noel said.

Organized entertainment agencies in the Philippines also supported calls to defer the implementation of the new policy because it could displace thousands of Filipinos working in that Asian country as entertainers.

In a letter to Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines Ryuichiro Yamasaki, the Confederated Association of Licensed Entertainment Agencies said that while it backs Japan's effort to curb human trafficking, the new policy failed to distinguish between legitimate performing artists and illegal performers who sneak into the country on commercial or tourist visas.

Palace vows protection of journalists

THE GOVERNMENT is trying to solve cases involving the murder of journalists, President Macapagal-Arroyo's spokesperson said Wednesday, describing claims that the country is one of the world's most dangerous for reporters as misleading.

"We are determined to protect media practitioners in the course of their professional undertakings," said presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye in reaction to a report by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ).

The IFJ report said the murder of 13 journalists in 2004, up from three in 2003, had created a crisis for the free press in the Philippines and tarnished the country's democratic credentials.

"The report is misleading because the majority of the cases involving the slaying of journalists have been solved," by a special task force charged with probing the killings, Bunye said.

However, the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines in a statement attacked Bunye's remarks, charging that "he's the one misleading the public."

The group said Bunye's definition of "solved" merely meant that a suspect had been identified in the murders, not that the killer had been caught or convicted.

Bunye's remark "does not do justice to the victims. Indeed, it mocks the victims and their families," the statement added.

The IFJ has charged that 55 journalists had been killed since democracy was restored in 1986 and not a single person convicted. *AFP*

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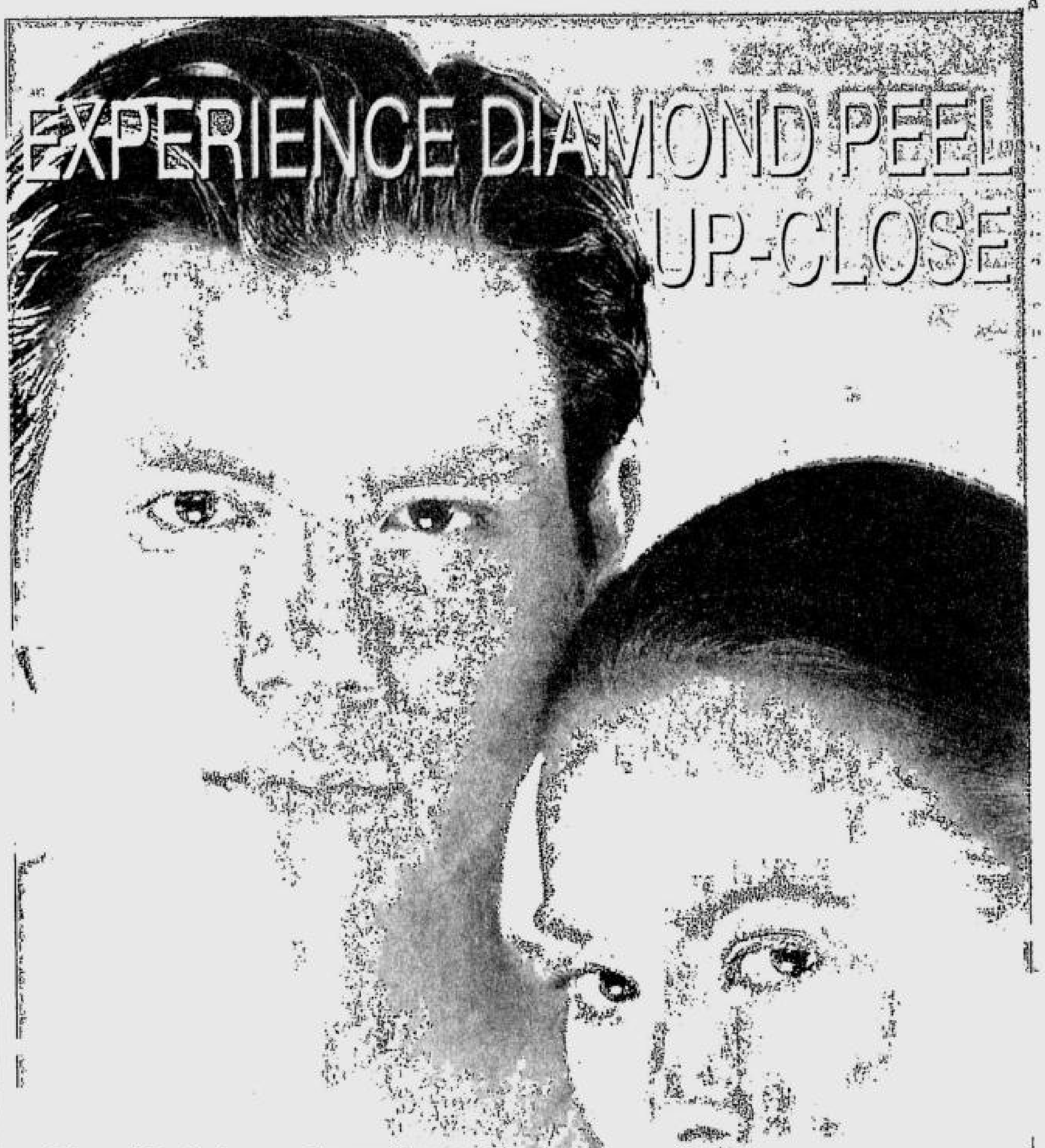

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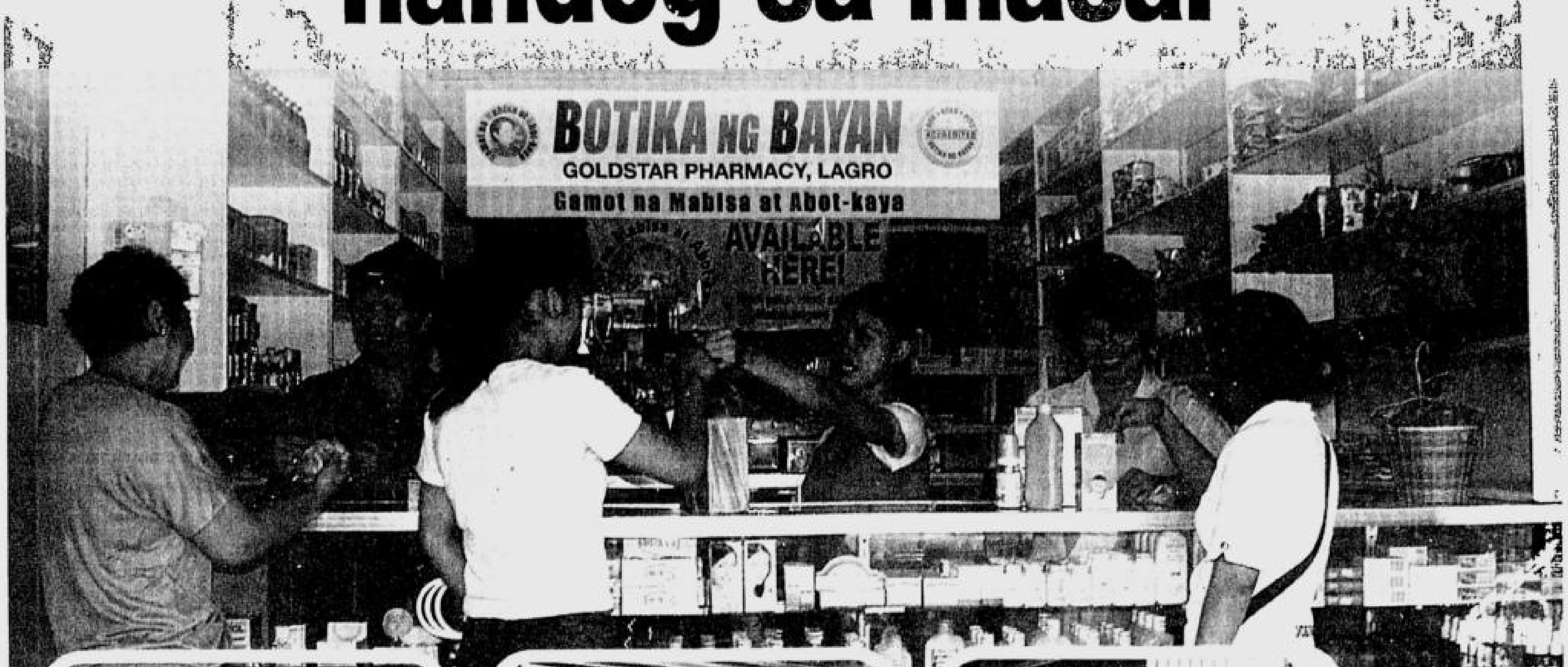

Botika ng Bayan -
Quezon City
Ascension Rd.,
Brgy. Greater Lagro

BOTIKA NG BAYAN
PITC-MAKATI
Gamot na Mabisa at Abot-kaya

Botika ng Bayan - PITC-Makati City
2nd Floor, NDC Bldg., Tordesillas St.

BOTIKA NG BAYAN
DEFINED WILL, LIPA
Gamot na Mabisa at Abot-kaya

Botika ng Bayan - Batangas
P. Torres St., Lipa City

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Save More Drug - Quezon City
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IMPORTED MEDICINES* DRUG/DOSAGE	GENERIC NAME	CURRENT MARKET PRICE	PRESYONG BOTIKA NG BAYAN	YOU SAVE
ANTI-BACTERIALS				
BACTRIM ADULT 400/80mg tab	Cotrimoxazole	₱ 15.60	₱ 7.00	₱ 8.60
BACTRIM DS 800/160mg tab	Cotrimoxazole	27.50	12.50	15.00
AUGMENTIN 375mg tab	Co-amoxiclav	72.00	64.50	7.50
AUGMENTIN 625mg tab	Co-amoxiclav	89.25	80.00	9.25
ANTI-HYPERTENSIVES				
TENORMIN 50mg tab	Atenolol	24.25	8.80	15.45
BETALOC 50mg tab	Metoprolol	11.25	6.00	5.25
BETALOC 100mg tab	Metoprolol	19.50	12.00	7.50
ORAL HYPOGLYCEMIC/ ANTI-DIABETES AGENTS				
DAONIL 5mg tab	Glibenclamide	9.30	5.10	4.20
ORAL HYPOGLYCEMIC/ ANTI-DIABETES AGENTS				
EUGLUCON 5mg tab	Glibenclamide	₱ 9.70	₱ 5.25	4.45
BRONCHODILATORS				
VENTORLIN (Ventolin) 100mcg x 200doses Inh	Salbutamol	331.50	280.00	51.50
ANTI-MOTILITY AGENTS/ ANTI-DIARRHEALS				
BUSCOPAN 10mg tab	Hyoscine-N-butylbromide	9.75	7.00	2.75
IMODIUM 2mg cap	Loperamide	10.00	7.00	3.00
ANTI-EPILEPTICS				
DILANTIN 100mg cap	Phenytoin	22.50	12.00	10.50
ANTI-BACTERIALS				
DALACIN-C 150mg cap	Clindamycin	38.50	35.00	3.50

Botika ng Bayan Drugstores

Makati – PITC, 2nd flr. NDC Bldg., Tordesillas St. • **Quezon City** – Ascension Rd., Bgy. Greater Lagro • Dep't. of Agrarian Reform Employees Association Coop. (DAREA), Kalayaan Ave. • **Batangas** – P. Torres St., Lipa City.

Also Available thru Accredited Members of the Drugstores Association of the Philippines (DSAP)

BOTICA TANDANG SORA Quezon City - Visayas Ave.; Road 8 Proj. 6 • **CARLOS SUPER DRUG Lucena City** - Tagarao Sts., Quezon Ave; Rizal St., Merchan; Evangelista, Evangelista St.; Public Market; Quezon Ave., Cabana Branch; Quezon Ave., Cathedral • C. M. Recto • **Metro Manila** – E. Garcia St., Q. Mart; New York, Cubao, **Marikina** - Calumpang • **Cavite** – Cavite City • **CARLOS DIV.** – Payless Foodmart, Lucena City; Bagsak-Presyo Supermart, Quezon City • **CHAVEZ PHARMACY Batangas City** - P. Burgos St.; Evangelista St.; Rizal Ave.; Roxas Road; Julian Pastor Memorial Market; Ilustre St., Lemery; Ebora St.; Atienza St., Lemery • **CORSAN'S DRUGSTORE Pasig City** - Santolan; Santa Lucia; Manggahan • **Antipolo** - Quezon Ext.; **Cainta** - Bonifacio Ave. • **EMILENE'S PHARMACY Muntinlupa** – Shopwise Festival Mall, Alabang; Alabang1, Public Market; Alabang 2, Alabang Public Market • **Parañaque** - Better Living Subd.; Palanyag Road, Sucat; La Huerta • **Cavite** - Bacoor Public Market; Binakayan, Kawit • **Taguig** - Bicutan Public Market; FTI, PNR Site • **Pasay** - Masagana Citimall; Cartimar Shopping Center • **Makati** - Guadalupe Viejo • **Mandaluyong** - Market Place, Kalentong • **Manila** - Rustan Harrison, Harrison Plaza • Masagana Telamart • **Malate** - Leveriza, San Andres • **Quezon City** -Shopwise Cubao • **Laguna** - Brgy. Nuevo, San Pedro • Times Plaza • **EMMAFLOR DRUG Makati City** - Pasong Tamo; Buting, Fort Bonifacio; Nuevo, Guadalupe Nuevo; Arcade, Sacramento; M. Reyes, Bangkal; Edsa cor. Aguleya St.; Kalayaan Talipapa, Guadalupe; Pasong Tirad • **Taguig** - Signal Village • **Mandaluyong** - Barangka • **Muntinlupa** - Soldiers Hill, Putatan • **Laguna** - San Pedro Town Center • **FARMACIA BALINGIT** - **Pangasinan** – **Dagupan City** : M. H. Del Pilar St.; A. B. Fernandez Ave.; **Mangaldan** : Rizal St.; **Urdaneta** : M. Sison St ; **Lingayen** : Nicanor cor.Bonifacio St.; **San Carlos City** : Roxas Blvd., Nicanor St.; New Public Market, Roxas Blvd. • **FARMACIA BORDADOR Bulacan** - Meycauayan • **FARMACIA KAPITBAHAY** - **Caloocan** - Dagat-Dagatan Ave. • **Navotas** - Bagus St. • **FARMACIA PERALTA Pasig** - Palatiw St.; San Joso; Kapasigan; Caniogan; Rosario; Ugong; Brgy. San Joaquin: Kalawaan; Brgy Malinao; Pasig Public Market; Santos St., Palatiw; Market Ave., Palatiw • **Pateros** - Almeda St.; Aguho • **Taguig** - Sta. Ana; Tuktukan • **Marikina** - Sto. Niño; Sta. Elena; Farmers/Tumana Concepcion; J. P. Rizal Sto. Niño • **Cainta** - Ortigas Ave. Ext. • **Rizal** - San Mateo • **Quezon City** - San Francisco Del Monte • **Makati** - Comembo • **Cavite** - Bulihan, Silang • **HANSEL'S PHARMACY** - **Las Piñas** - Almanza • **MARCELO'S DRUGSTORE** – **Makati**, J. P. Rizal Ave., Brgy. Tejeros • **MED-EXCEL PHARMACY Bataan** - Orion; Balanga; Botica Bataan, Limay • **SAVE MORE DRUG** – **Manila** - Lacson Underpass, Quiapo, Yiaya cor. M. de Santos, Binondo; Balut Nepa St., Balut, Tondo; Fabella, Felix Huertas St., Sta. Cruz; Pedro Gil, Paco • **Quezon City** - Diliman; Banawe; Anonas Ext., Sikatuna; B F. 1, BF Homes, BF 2 ,Sto. Nino St., Holy Spirit, BF 3 San Simon Holy Spirit; Bagong Silangan 1, Del Pilar St., Bagong Silangan 2, Dove St.; Bagong Silangan 3, JP Rizal St.; Batasan Rd., Batasan Hills; Commonwealth 1 & 2, Commonwealth Market; Don Antonio Hts., Commonwealth; Katuparan 1, Commonwealth Avenue; Katuparan 2, Brgy. Commonwealth; Kaunlaran, Commonwealth; J. Francisco, Krus Na Ligas; 1 BP Rd., Litex, Commonwealth; Manggahan 2, Villongco St., Commonwealth; Glori Supermart Cpd., Novaliches Proper; Pilot 1 Sumapi St., Pilot Brgy., Commonwealth; Pilot 2 NGCH Commonwealth; Pilot 3 Adarna Ext , Brgy. Commonwealth; Villongco, Villongco St., Commonwealth Ave. • **Caloocan** - Bagong Silang; Main Road, Bagong Silang; Sangandaan Market and Trading Center; Samson Rd., Monumento; A. Mabini St., Sangandaan • **Antipolo** - Masinag Market • **Marulas** - Pio Valenzuela, **Bulacan** - Baliwag Market; Plaza Naning, Baliwag; Barrio Bagumbayan; Hagonoy, PNR Crossing, Malolos; Mojon, Malolos; Crisostomo St., Malolos; Banga 1st, Plaridel • **Navotas** - Agora I, Agora II, Northbay Blvd. • **Malabon** – Women's Club St., Hulong Duhat • **Rizal** - Montalban, Amityville Subd., Rodriguez • **Valenzuela City** – Polo, M. H. Del Pilar St., Poblacion • **558 PHARMACY & CONVENIENCE STORE** – **Batangas** : RBL Bldg., Ilustre Ave., Lemery

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AFPCES Drugstores

Quezon City : Camp Gen Emilio Aguinaldo; AFP Medical Center, V. Luna Rd. • **Makati** - Phil. Army, Fort Bonifacio; Bonifacio Naval Station, Fort Bonifacio • **Pasay** - Villamor Air Base • **Baguio City** – FDP Drugstore, Fort Del Pilar.

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GLOBE G CASH

First mobile business registration in the world

Innovations leader Globe Handyphone marks another milestone with the world's first-ever business registration renewal via mobile phone. From January 10 until midnight of January 31, 2005, busy entrepreneurs will enjoy the convenience of renewing their business registrations beyond working hours, thanks to G-Cash, Globe's new category of m-commerce service that transforms Globe subscribers' phones into mobile wallets.

With G-Cash, business owners are spared the hassle of spending precious work hours to go out and renew their business registrations. Now, processing their papers is as simple as a text that takes no less than a few seconds with the secure service of Globe G-Cash, leaving them with more time to attend to other business matters.

LAND BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES

BIR's exclusive collection agent for mobile registration renewal

This service is made possible by Globe's partnership with the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR). The bureau exclusively nominated the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) as its official collection agent for this project, which follows on the heels of a successful Globe-BIR collaboration, the internationally acclaimed text promo, *Bayan I-txt Ang Resibo*, which facilitated the swift updating of the BIR tax database. G-Cash payments are expected to boost early renewal of business registrations as well as enhance the BIR's efficiency by minimizing paperwork and improving the quality of service by reducing the number of walk-ins at the regional district offices (RDOs).

Read on to find out about this innovative new service.

When will business registration renewal via G-Cash start?

Business registration via G-Cash will officially start on January 10 and will end at midnight of January 31, 2005. During this period, you may pay your registration and renewal anytime and anywhere because G-Cash payment is not confined to the regular office and banking hours.

Effective February 01, 2005, taxpayers will have to pay their business registration renewal directly with their respective revenue district offices.

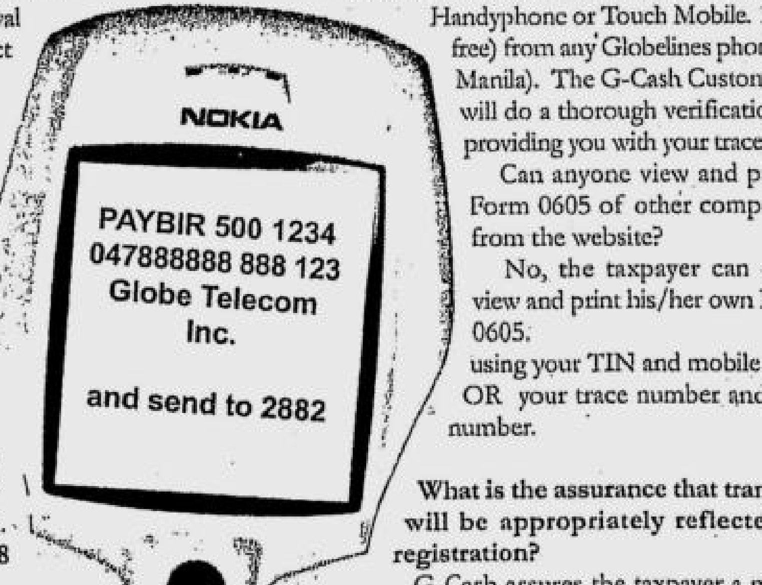
How do I pay my business registration renewal via G-Cash?

First, you must be a registered G-Cash subscriber (available only to Globe and Touch Mobile subscribers). As a G-Cash subscriber, you must have a minimum of P500 in your G-wallet to pay for your business registration fee.

Next, text "PAYBIR 500 <MPIN> <Tax Identification Number> <Taxpayer Branch Code> <Revenue District Office Code> <Registered Company Name>" and send to 2882. P1.00 per transaction.

Example: **PAYBIR 500 1234 047888888 888 123 Globe Telecom Inc.**

Once the transaction is completed, the subscriber will receive a confirmation message and corresponding trace number confirming the renewal of the said business registration. This will also be the corresponding BIR reference number.



What is a TIN? TPBC? RDO code?

TIN is defined as Tax Identification Number. It is the 9-digit number assigned by BIR to identify your company.

TPBC is defined as Taxpayer Branch Code. It is the last 3 digits of your Tax Identification Number (TIN).

RDO is defined as Revenue District Office Code. It is the 3-digit number starting from 000 to 123. It represents the Revenue District Office where your company is registered.

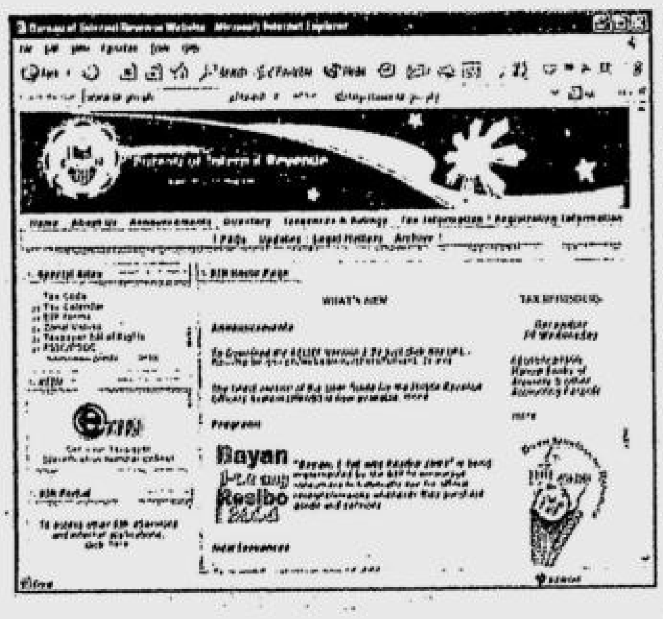
Do I need to file the Payment Form (Form 0605) separately?

No, you do not need to file your Payment Form (Form 0605) separately. This form will be available for printing from this website www.bir.gov.ph, 2 days after your G-Cash transaction.

All information provided by the taxpayer when paying G-Cash will be captured on this form.

How do I retrieve my Form 0605 from this website?

The taxpayer has two options to retrieve the Form 0605. One option is to log in using his/her TIN and mobile number. This is advisable for companies/taxpayers who maintain several branches. The succeeding screen will prompt the taxpayer to select the trace number of the transaction to retrieve the specific Form 0605 for that branch. The second option is to log in using his/her Trace Number and mobile number. The succeeding screen will bring the taxpayer directly to the specific Form 0605 represented by the trace number.



What is a trace number? What if I forgot the trace number?

The trace number is the confirmation number provided by Globe after you have completed your G-Cash transaction. This number will be printed on the lower portion of your Form 0605 together with the date of your G-Cash transaction.

In case you forgot your trace number, please call the G-Cash 24-Hour Hotline numbers: 2882 (toll-free) from your Globe Handyphone or Touch Mobile. 1-800-8 2882882 (toll free) from any Globelines phone or 7392882 (Metro Manila). The G-Cash Customer Service Agent will do a thorough verification before providing you with your trace number.

Can anyone view and print the Form 0605 of other companies from the website?

No, the taxpayer can only view and print his/her own Form 0605.

using your TIN and mobile number OR your trace number and mobile number.

What is the assurance that transaction via G-Cash will be appropriately reflected as my business registration?

G-Cash assures the taxpayer a more secure mode of payment. The transaction via G-Cash is captured at the speed of text and is electronically transmitted daily to the BIR database.

It updates the BIR database, and it is even faster than paying through the conventional channel.

What if I entered incorrect information when paying G-Cash?

To further ensure that only accurate information is captured, you will be immediately prompted in case incorrect information is inadvertently entered by the taxpayer such as TIN which should be a 9-digit number, TPBC should only be 3 digits while RDO should only contain numbers starting from 000 up to 123.

If, despite the verification, the taxpayer entered the wrong data, (example, incorrect 9-character TIN) your payment will still be considered as a valid transaction and will be forwarded to BIR. You may immediately call the BIR's 24/7 Contact Center at 981-8888 to report and request for the correction of information.

Note: You may be required to present some supporting documents.

Can I use any mobile phone or handset to pay for my business registration?

You may use any Globe or Touch Mobile phone to pay for your business registration so long as you enter the correct information about the company or business that you are registering such as the TIN, RDO, TPBC and Registered Company Name. However, when retrieving your Form 0605 from the website, make sure that you remember your TIN or trace number and the mobile phone number that you used when you transacted.

What is the telephone number of the BIR Contact Center?

You may call BIR's 24-hour Contact Center at 981-8888.

Who can avail of this service?

This service is available to all Globe and Touch Mobile subscribers. Anyone who wishes to avail of this service must be a registered G-Cash subscriber.

After registration, the subscriber/taxpayer may convert cash to electronic cash values, 'G-Cash,' to pay for the Annual Business Registration Fee.

Payment via G-Cash for 2005 Business Registration is accepted for corporate and individual taxpayers.

What will I receive to confirm my payment?

You will receive an SMS advisory with a corresponding trace number. You may also view and print the corresponding BIR Payment Form 0605 at 2 days after date of transaction.

How do I get a copy of my BIR Payment Form 0605?

Visit the BIR portal at www.bir.gov.ph and click on the PAYBIR link. Enter the trace number or your TIN and mobile number and click on "submit". The BIR Payment Form 0605 will be displayed with the corresponding information. Click on the print button to print.

What if I submitted an amount other than P500?

If you submitted an amount greater than P500, you may proceed to your RDO to file for your claim for a *tax credit refund*. If the amount submitted is lower, you may settle the balance separately but a corresponding penalty may be assessed if you settle beyond the prescribed registration period.

Globe G-Cash: An Outstanding Pinoy "First"

Right from the start, Globe Telecom has always been a leader in pioneering innovative services that enrich Filipinos' lives. From expanding the potential of the mobile phone as a communication and entertainment tool by introducing text messaging, personalized services, more varied reloading options and other conveniences, Globe has gone beyond connectivity to transform the cellphone into a mobile wallet and a reliable means of commerce, with the introduction of G-Cash, the first wireless and cardless m-commerce solution in the world.

More and more people are using G-Cash

G-Cash is a revolutionary service category that allows the subscriber to send and receive cash values, pay for purchases, and send remittances – all through text. In the two and a half months since it was launched, the number of G-Cash subscribers has already reached more than 200,000. An unprecedented total cash value of more than P70 million is currently circulating in the form of G-Cash.

The many firsts of G-Cash partnership

First in payment innovation

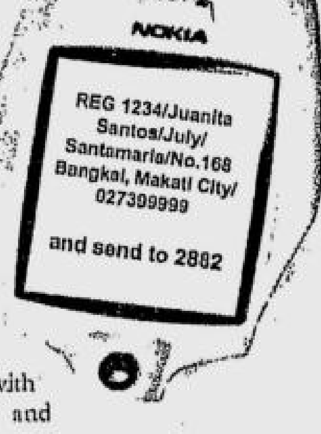
To meet the diverse needs of its subscribers, G-Cash has introduced many other "firsts" that enable Filipinos to achieve a better quality of life. Through strategic partnerships with major commercial establishments, it has improved our access to key products and services – being the first to provide a purely SMS-based means of payment for food, both in-store and food deliveries (from Jollibee, Burger King, Shakey's, and Max's), medicine (at Mercury Drug and Mansons Drug), and school and office supplies (at National Bookstore, Fully Booked and Biblarch). Other services are also covered, such as marine transportation ticket reservation (Super Ferry), hotel reservations (Westin Philippine Plaza), and entertainment (myAyala SureSeats M-Pass). At the most basic level, G-Cash can be used to send and receive money person-to-person for all the common transactions that are typically done with cash, like giving *baon* or gifts to loved ones and to make payments.

G-Cash helps Pinoy entrepreneurs

G-Cash has paved the way to uplift the economic conditions of many Pinoys. Through a tie-up with the Rural Bankers Association of the Philippines, G-Cash will enable the pilot of the first SMS-based microfinance effort. Small entrepreneurs in the provinces will be able to pay for loans availed from rural banks more quickly and easily, by sending their payments in the form of G-Cash. By linking up with the Bureau of Internal Revenue, G-Cash has also made it possible for owners of businesses to renew their registration and licenses. This marks a milestone in the use of mobile communication technology to facilitate financial transactions with the government, being the first of its kind in the world.

The first time you can donate at the speed of text

Even more importantly, G-Cash makes it possible and easy for Pinoys to do their share in reaching out to those in need. G-Cash is the first mobile commerce service that enables subscribers to extend assistance to victims of recent calamities, such as the tsunami in Asia and typhoons in the Philippines, by texting in their donations to the Red Cross and UNICEF. Supporting these humanitarian efforts is in line with Globe's overall vision of uniting and strengthening the nation.


NOKIA
REG 1234/Juanita Santos/July/ Santamaria/No.168 Bangkal, Makati City/ 027399999
and send to 2882

G-Cash has truly emerged as a convenient, safe, and reliable alternative to many transactions that are normally done using cash. It has opened up more exciting and empowering possibilities for Filipinos everywhere. Pinoys can really be proud of this groundbreaking service, which is set to blaze even more trails in the year ahead.

Militants want Gloria out but they also don't want Noli

IF PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo resigns or is forced to do so before her term ends, Vice President Noli de Castro would not be the logical choice, according to the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan.

The national alliance of militant groups yesterday said it was not keen on supporting the constitutional succession route again, especially with De Castro next in line if Ms Arroyo is somehow forced out of office.

"Constitutional succession won't work this time. The Vice President himself is the subject of electoral protest," Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes said.

"The Vice President won't be a viable replacement," he said.

Bayan had earlier proposed that a "democratic coalition" of those who would work for Ms Arroyo's ouster serve as "caretaker" of a government in transition pending the results of a "snap" election.

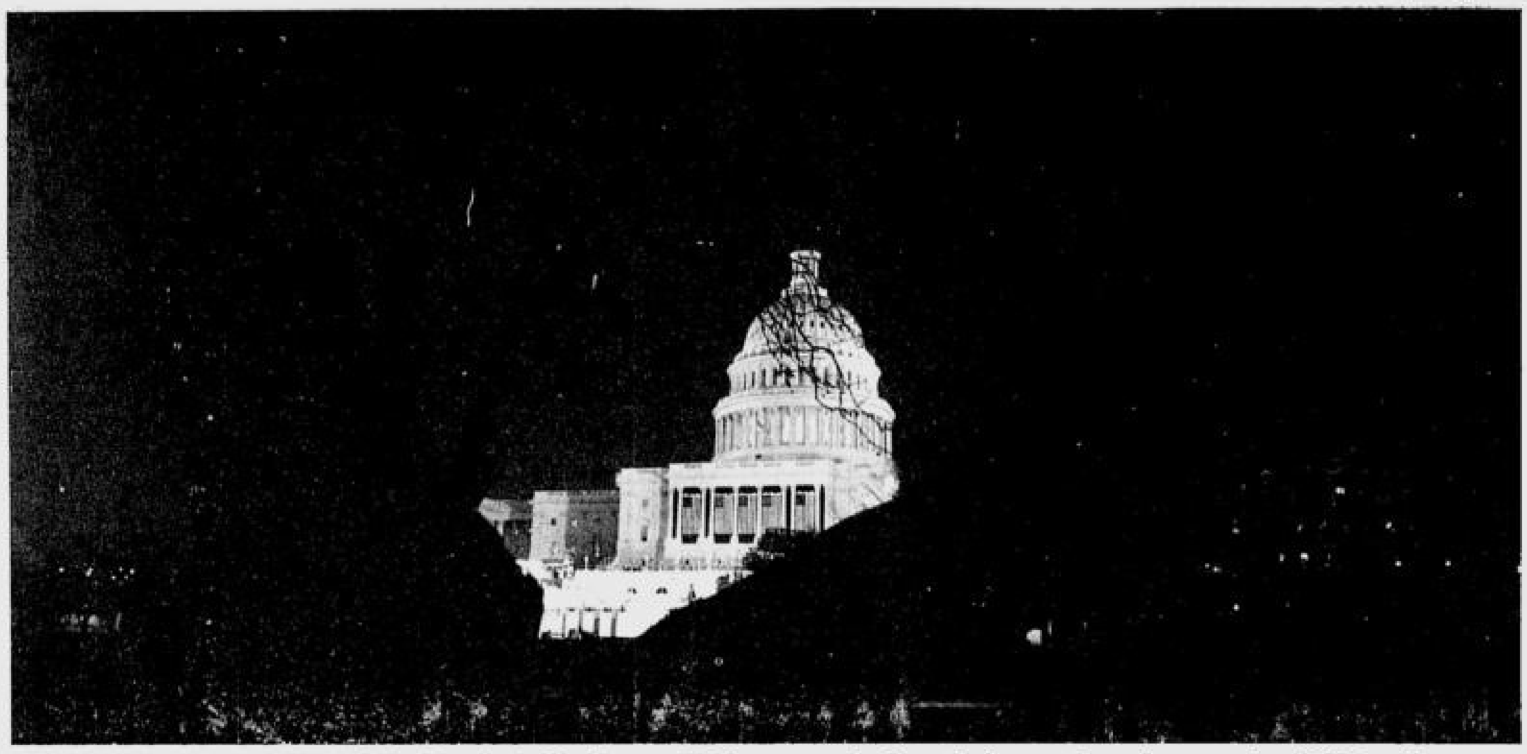
Reyes also said the people had "learned their lesson" from Edsa II.

"The people's movement can change regimes, but it's not yet strong enough to change the elite-dominated political setup. That would probable entail several more Edsas," he said.

Bayan led the militant groups that supported Ms Arroyo as replacement for then President Joseph Estrada in January 2001 because she was his "constitutional successor."

Reyes said that while Ms Arroyo did not live up to the progressive sector's expectations, the militant groups did not regret their decision to support her then.

"At that time, [supporting Ms Arroyo] was a good option. It was important to prevent the military from taking over. At that time, it was the option accepted by the broad coalition of anti-Estrada forces," Reyes said. *Norman Bordadora*



THE US Capitol is awash in TV lighting Tuesday in Washington, DC, in preparation for today's second term inauguration of US President George W. Bush.

AFP

Much of world thinks Bush is dangerous

From page A1

pany GlobalScan.

"This is quite a grim picture for the US," he said.

Need for more diplomacy

In Senate confirmation hearings, Bush's nominee as secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, Tuesday acknowledged the need for more diplomacy and for the rebuilding of alliances. She said the UN interaction with the world "must be a conversation not a monologue."

But typically, one British contributor to the World Service website Wednesday said Bush's reelection "means more pollution, war and social injustice (particularly in America)." He asked, "Whatever happened to the freedom-loving, forward-thinking, right-minded people that made America the envy of the rest of us?"

Even in traditional US allies such as Germany, France and Britain, as well as in neighboring Canada and Mexico, sentiment was predominantly anti-Bush. In Turkey, a US ally and the only Muslim member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 82 percent of those polled said Bush's reelection was negative for world peace.

Latin America anti-Bush

Anti-Bush sentiment was also strong in Latin America, with 79 percent of those polled in Argentina and 78 percent in Brazil describing his reelection in negative terms.

In the poll, which took place from Nov. 15 to Jan. 5, between 500 and 1,800 people were surveyed in each country.

Margin of error

The margin of error in extrapolating the results to the entire population was placed between 2.5 and four percentage points, depending on the country. *AFP*

Food, not belt-tightening, feeds country's poor

From page A1

relief-goods mentality."

She said food would be "staring us in the face" if only Filipinos could make use of the country's biodiversity, which is said to be among the richest in the world.

The results of the SWS survey were released on Tuesday, as President Macapagal-Arroyo prepared to mark her fourth year in office.

In a statement she issued yesterday, Ms Arroyo acknowledged the hardships that the poor continued to endure, as reflected in the survey.

Food on each table

"We are inspired by the sacrifices of our people and these must also be seen as a sign of their fervent hopes for a better future," she said, adding:

"Things will continue to look up as we match our people's faith and courage with the steady will to fight corruption, cut wasteful spending, put our fiscal house in order and grow the economy to create jobs and feed the hungry."

The President assured the people that putting food on every table remained among the highest in her list of priorities, along with the provision of clean water, education and health care to every community.

"Every step forward we take in bolstering the economy brings us closer to these goals. We must continue to move with a constant sense of urgency and unity in the path of change and reform," she said.

The SWS said the number of families that had nothing to eat in the past three months declined from 15.1 percent in the third quarter last year to 11.5 in the fourth quarter.

It also said the self-rated poverty threshold—the monthly income a family needs so as not to be considered poor—fell to P5,000 from P10,000 in the previous years.

Initial success

The SWS said that since the cost of living was actually rising, this only meant that the poor made further belt-tightening measures to survive.

At the House of Representatives, two administration lawmakers said the results of the SWS survey indicated the initial success of Ms Arroyo's anti-poverty programs.

Nueva Ecija Rep. Aurelio Umali said the survey showed that the people themselves had recognized the improvement in their social condition.

Umali said the government should pursue its development agenda in order to sustain the positive impact of the poverty alleviation program. In addition, he said, the government must focus on the food security program through modernized agriculture to wipe out hunger and poverty.

Zamboanga del Norte Rep. Roseller Barinaga said the SWS survey showed the people's positive outlook about their condition.

He said that since the start of Ms Arroyo's administration in 2001, she had focused on the needs of the poor, like food, health care, power and water, education and jobs.

Barinaga also said stationary and rolling stores had been put up in the most depressed communities nationwide to sell low-priced rice and other commodities.

"The Arroyo administration reached out to the poor to ensure their access to social services as well as low-cost food and basic commodities to help them survive," he added.

Value-added tax

But the militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan said the administration lawmakers should not gloat over the SWS survey results because the passage of a measure that would raise the value-added tax from 10 to 12 percent would surely worsen hunger among the poor.

"The poor will be even poorer if the VAT hike is passed. It is sheer dishonesty on the part of the government to say that the increase will not have any effect on basic goods and commodities," said Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes Jr. *Reports from Volt Contreras, Juliet Labog-Javellana and Cynthia D. Balana*

Let them eat weeds, grass, ferns, leaves

From page A1

Philippine soil—in the forest, by the roadside, in vacant lots and buildings' crevices—is "salad material" or can be cooked like any greens, said Nonie Dolera, one of the authors and president of the Fern and Nature Society of the Philippines.

"This is a campaign against hunger, that's why we particularly listed down plants that are easily identifiable by the common folk," he told the INQUIRER yesterday.

"No Filipino Should Go Hungry," the book declares in its opening page before extolling the medicinal, nutritious, and culinary potentials of wild plants with rustic-sounding names like *pansit-pancitan, takip-kuhol, yampong, lupo-lupo, barbotak, talinum, pakong buaya,* etc.

Coming off the press last November, it features a total of 78 plants, with photos and short texts about their uses both as medicine or as ingredients for a refreshing beverage, side dish, or viand. Plant-specific recipes form the last chapters.

Dolera, an accountant by profession and a son of Boholano peasants, shares the byline aside from Lichauco, with fellow plant enthusiasts Carmen Osmeña Florento, and Flor Gozon Tarriela.

Blanched or boiled

The recipes strongly recommend weeds for various food preparations as simple as having them boiled or blanched in salted water to make a salad, to using them for soups, omelets, or pasta dishes.

In the interview, held at the home of environmentalist Odette Alcantara in Quezon City, Dolera said he certainly practices what he preaches: "Weed salads," for example, are common fare at his home and are often served to guests.

The key is to harvest the weeds, as much as possible, in places that are not polluted. To ensure they're clean before they are eaten, wash them with salted water, he said.

Life-savers

If some would find his food choices too daring if not eccentric, remember that an earlier generation of Filipinos had these weeds and grass to thank for staving off hunger during World War II, Dolera pointed out.

"These same plants saved many lives then," he stressed.

In his view, the book therefore is not introducing Filipinos to go adventurous in the kitchen but is actually leading them to "rediscover" the old ways.

He blamed "crass commercialism and the Western culture's conditioning" of the Pinoy mindset—and taste buds—for the disappearance of these "indigenous" foods from the dinner table.

McDonalds' mind-set

"Children nowadays can only think of McDonalds when they ask for food," he wryly quipped.

Alcantara, who became an instant fan of Dolera et al, said her advocacy group Mother Earth Philippines will work to have it translated into the various Filipino dialects and put it in "komiks" form to be more accessible to the poor.

Edible landscape

"We (Filipinos) have such an edible landscape, and we've only gotten poor because we have either wasted or remained ignorant of our resources," Alcantara said.

Marine group set to desert Erap 3 days ahead of Reyes

From page A1

his own military chief, Gen. Fabian Ver, in February 1986.

Or, worse, Reyes, as AFP chief of staff, would have faced the "breakaway group" and matched the rebel firepower—to a bloody ending.

But Espinosa and his principal backer, Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson, did not foresee how Reyes would react upon learning of the planned breakaway.

SINGSON: Principal backer

ESPINOSA: No plans for junta.

Intelligence briefing

On Jan. 19, 2001, Reyes called service commanders to a meeting at a house in Corinthian Village just across from the Edsa Shrine.

Then Navy chief Adm. Guillermo Wong was attending a meeting at the Navy headquarters on Roxas Boulevard when summoned. He proceeded to the house, where he joined the other service commanders for an intelligence briefing on the political standoff that had developed between Estrada and the "people power" assembly that was then already on its third day at Edsa.

This was what was discussed at the meeting, as Wong recalled in an interview on Feb. 28, 2001:

"The big picture was that there were two rebel groups that will go to Edsa. One group will install a President of [its] choice; the other will form a military-civilian junta.

"One group [according to the briefing] is led by Espinosa; the other group is still secret. The [communist] New People's Army was not yet in the scenario. But we were worried that the NPA would exploit the situation.

"These two groups, they will divide the AFP, and they will divide the country by attracting the others [to their cause]."

Wong did not immediately take a position.

"I kept asking questions because there was already a proposal to go to Edsa. So, [I and Air Force chief Lt. Gen. Benjamin Defensor] asked: Why? I asked a lot of questions because I would be bringing along the 19,000 men and women of the Navy."

But after seeing the "big picture," Wong agreed to go to Edsa "to prevent bloodshed."

'Nagbaliktaran na'

Immediately after the meeting, Reyes—along with then AFP deputy chief Lt. Gen. Jaime de los Santos, Army chief Lt. Gen. Diomedio Villanueva, Defensor and Wong— went to Edsa, climbed the stage, and announced their withdrawal of support from Estrada.

Espinosa was at his office at the Joint Command Staff College (JCSC) when he learned of Reyes' switch.

This was how things turned out, according to his recollection:

As a security precaution, Espinosa left the JCSC and moved to a house in Valle Verde just across from the Ultra where the "breakaway troops" were waiting. There he got a call from Singson, who was at the Edsa Shrine.

"Singson said, 'Come here, *nagbaliktaran na lahat* (everyone has switched camp).' So *ano pang gagawin ko* (what else was there for me to do)?"

From Valle Verde, Espinosa went to the then Galleria Suites, where Singson had reserved rooms for their use.

"Chavit was on the phone. He [was cussing] and saying, 'There were so many characters at Edsa. I had not talked with any of them. It was you I had talked with. And it was you who was not there.'"

At one point, Singson poked fun at the turncoats who had showed up at Edsa. "If even Ping (then Philippine National Police chief Panfilo Lacson), arrives, I will go back to Erap."

Word of honor

Espinosa said the military breakaway was planned as early as October 2000.

About a week after Singson told the PNP about the supposed plot to kill him, and his subsequent exposé on Estrada's alleged receipt of multimillion-peso kickbacks from "jueteng" operators, Espinosa said he received a "feeler" to meet the Ilocos Sur governor.

He said the meeting was arranged by one Boy Castillo, who "cased" his office for days and whom he thought was a military intelligence agent.

When Singson and Espinosa finally met, the latter said he found "another warrior who had a word of honor."

It likewise helped that they both spoke Ilocano and were even co-sponsors at the wedding of a daughter of a common friend.

Espinosa said he also helped find "dependable" security for Singson, a survivor of several assassination attempts, including that allegedly hatched by Estrada's group in October 2000.

"I recommended ex-soldiers with undiminished nerve," he said. "Ready to fight, ready to kill."

'Big fish'

In January 2001, Espinosa met with Chief Supt. Hermogenes Ebdane at the back of the grandstand at the Bonifacio Naval Station.

"We agreed that once I was at Edsa, he will bring the PNP group there and withdraw support from Estrada in behalf of Ping Lacson. We shook hands and parted," Espinosa said.

He said he continued "going around" and talking with various groups and personalities, among them Rafael Alunan, Jose "Peping" Cojuangco and Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr.

"The general feeling was to wait for the decision of the impeachment [court], especially if there would be an acquittal," he said.

Late in 2000, Singson told him they would speak with a "big fish."

They went to a room on the 24th floor of the New World Hotel, where then Vice President Macapagal-Arroyo was waiting.

"I didn't expect her to remember me, but when she saw me, she said, 'Spines, *ikaw pala* (it's you),'" Espinosa recalled. "So we talked."

But then ex-Defense Secretary Renato de Villa "learned about our plans," Espinosa said, adding:

"He thought we would attack Edsa. It became complicated."

'No other choice'

On the afternoon of Jan. 19, 2001, Reyes grabbed the bull by the horns and withdrew support from Estrada.

The next day, Estrada left Malacañang, and Ms Arroyo took her oath as the 14th President of the republic.

Was it the right thing to do?

Wong said: "There was no other choice. But just one thing—I do not want to do that again. You should not let us do that again. The military should not do that again."

Editor's Note: The interviews quoted in this report were conducted for a yet unpublished book on Edsa II.

Aklanons want apology from ABS-CBN

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

KALIBO, Aklan—Aklanons have urged giant television network ABS-CBN to publicly apologize for erroneously reporting that Sunday's carnage in this town happened inside the Kalibo Cathedral.

The network said in a statement that it already acknowledged its mistake and had apologized last Sunday but it would issue another public apology on Jan. 23.

In a one-page letter addressed to the network's president, Kalibo Mayor Raymar Rebaldo requested the network to correct the "glaring inaccuracies" in the reports aired on it's TV Patrol program hours after the carnage on Jan. 16 until the next day.

Rebaldo said ABS-CBN should correct its reports "to cushion the very negative impact of the inaccurate reports" and placate tourists, devotees and prospective visitors of the town.

Rebaldo said the network should make the necessary corrections and issue a public apology "in the interest of truth and responsible broadcasting."

The report showed graphics showing purportedly where PO1 Jonathan Moreño, the policeman who went on a rampage, and the victims were positioned inside the church.

The killings happened 30 meters from the Kalibo police station, which is around 100 meters from the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist.

The mayor's letter was faxed to the network on Tuesday and yesterday, said Noel de la Cruz, municipal public information officer.

In response to the mayor's letter, the network said it will issue a public apology for the erroneous "animation incident" on TV Patrol World on Sunday, a week after the shooting.

"It is with deepest regret that this unfortunate incident happened. Indeed, we share your pain and disgust in the 'wrong depiction' of that shooting…" said Jake Maderazo, vice president for news production, in a letter that they will send to Rebaldo.

Kalibo Bishop Jose Romeo Lazo also lamented the network's report. "It was clearly inaccurate reporting," the bishop said.

"It cast a bad light on Kalibo," he told reporters who interviewed him on the impact of the killings on the festival.

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GMA to shake up Poro Point board

FED UP with the lack of progress in one of the most promising development sites in North Luzon, President Macapagal-Arroyo has hinted of shaking up the board of directors of Poro Point Management Corp. (PPMC) which is dominated by kin and allies of Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson.

"We probably need a new board at Poro Point," said President Arroyo in reply to a complaint by residents of North Luzon on the lack of any sign of development in Poro Point aired over an interview in dzRH radio.

Although the President did not elaborate, a Malacañang source said her statement caused some uneasiness among members of the 11-member board headed by Filadelfo S. Rojas, concurrent chair of the Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) who were appointed only three months ago by Ms Arroyo.

Rojas is a relative of Singson (who is also the presidential adviser for North Luzon development) who blew the whistle on President Joseph Estrada's jueteng kickbacks that led to his ouster and triggered Ms Arroyo's rise to power. The INQUIRER called Rojas' BCDA office but he was unavailable as of press time.

Two other PPMC board members—Emma Barbon Lim and Ma. Carmencita Ancheta-Itchon—are close associates of Singson and both appeared at the Senate impeachment trial of Estrada. Lim claimed to be a private secretary of Singson while Itchon claimed to be Estrada's bookkeeper for the Fountainbleu Casino in Clark economic zone in Pampanga.

Other members of the board are Juanito F. Antonio, Amparo Espiras, Alvin Capino, Joselito M. de Guzman, Pantaleon Dumlao Jr., Jose Madayag Jr., Anthony Manguiat and Yves Nisce.

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The Reader's Digest official list of winners should all cases be conclusive. All the winners will be notified by registered mail on how to claim the prize. In case of queries, please contact us at A-Z DIRECT MARKETING INC. 723 Sgt Bumatay St. Plainview Mandaluyong City 1550

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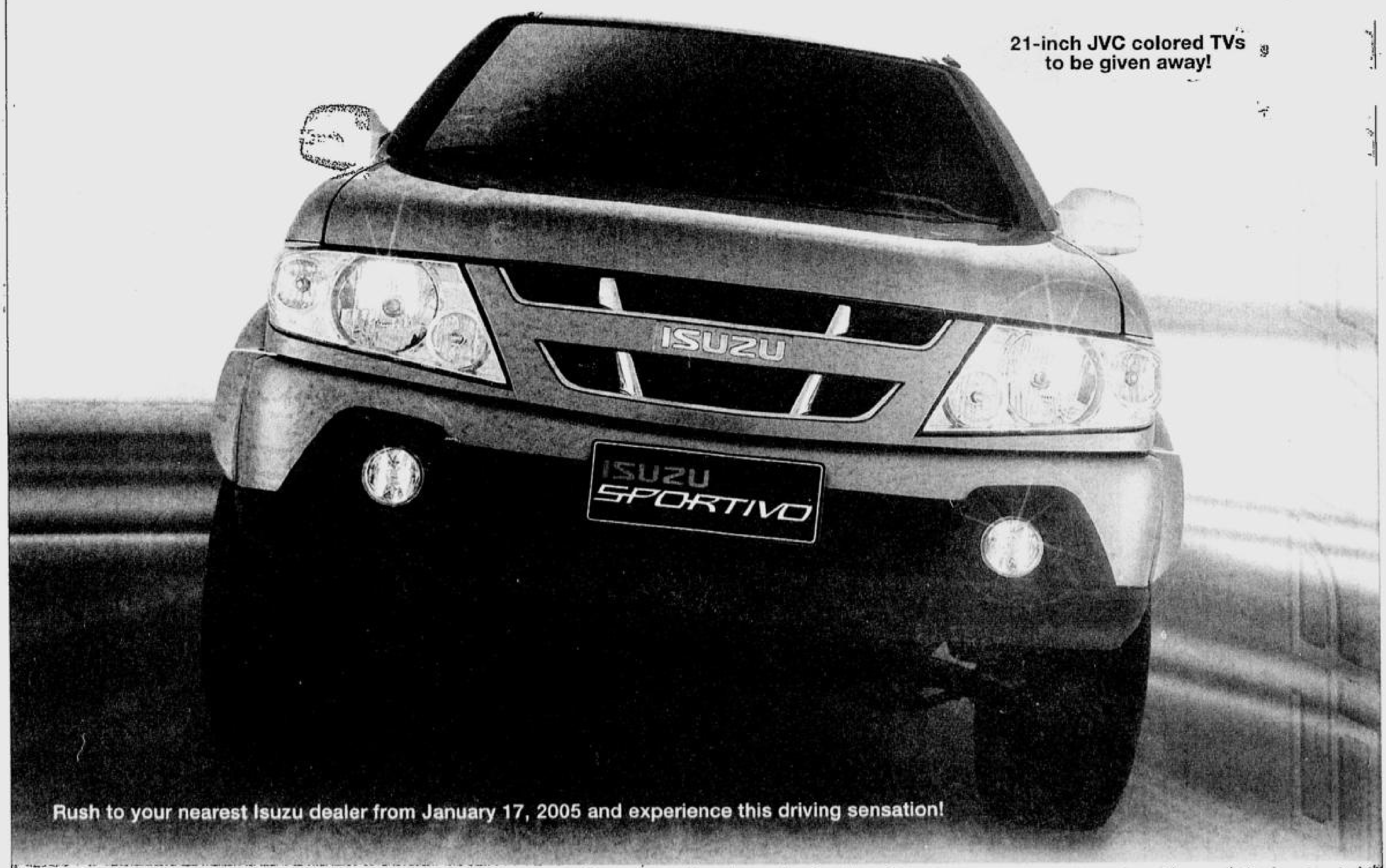

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

US lists Cuba, Burma, Belarus, Zimbabwe as tyrannic regimes

NEW YORK—In an echo of President George W. Bush's "axis of evil," Condoleezza Rice on Tuesday named Cuba, Burma, Belarus and Zimbabwe as "outposts of tyranny" requiring close US attention.

Early in Bush's first term, he listed Iraq, Iran and North Korea as part of an "axis of evil" in the post-Sept. 11 era; the United States later invaded Iraq, ousting longtime dictator Saddam Hussein.

"To be sure, in our world there remain outposts of tyranny and America stands with oppressed people on every continent... in Cuba, and Burma (Myanmar), and North Korea, and Iran, and Belarus, and Zimbabwe," Rice told a Senate committee considering her nomination to succeed Colin Powell as secretary of state.

A look at US tensions with the countries Rice named:

Belarus

President Alexander Lukashenko, first elected in 1994, has stifled dissent and persecuted independent media and opposition parties while prolonging his power through elections that international organizations say were marred by fraud. The United States has refused to recognize his election.

The United States has repeatedly criticized Lukashenko for restricting freedom of speech, press and freedom of association and assembly. The United States maintains close ties with the opposition while seeking to foster democracy in the former Soviet republic.

The Belarus government responded to Rice's remarks by saying she was out of touch.

"The mention of Belarus in Condoleezza Rice's announcement shows that her conception of Belarus is, unfortunately, as yet quite far from reality," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Andrei Savinykh said.

Cuba

Cuban authorities have long said the US government is planning a military attack on the island—something US officials deny. US-Cuba relations, never good during Fidel Castro's four decades of communist rule, have deteriorated further under the Bush administration, which has toughened trade and travel regulations and last year published a plan for a democratic Cuba after Castro's eventual death.

The US and Cuba have not had diplomatic relations since shortly after Castro took power.

"The United States condemns the Cuban regime's abuse of advocates of peaceful change and reform," state department spokesperson Richard Boucher said on Nov. 4. "We call on the regime to cease its repression and release all political prisoners."

Burma

Burma has been ruled by the military for more than four decades. The regime is shunned by many Western countries, but the United States has been one of the most aggressive in isolating it with political and economic sanctions.

The United States accuses the junta of human rights abuses including the use of slave labor and forced labor, and the persecution of pro-democracy activists and ethnic minorities.

Washington has criticized the regime for failing to surrender power in 1990 to the democratically elected party of Nobel Peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, the opposition leader who has repeatedly been put under house arrest.

Washington cut off almost all direct aid to Burma after the military suppressed pro-democracy demonstrations in 1988, killing hundreds, or even thousands of civilians.

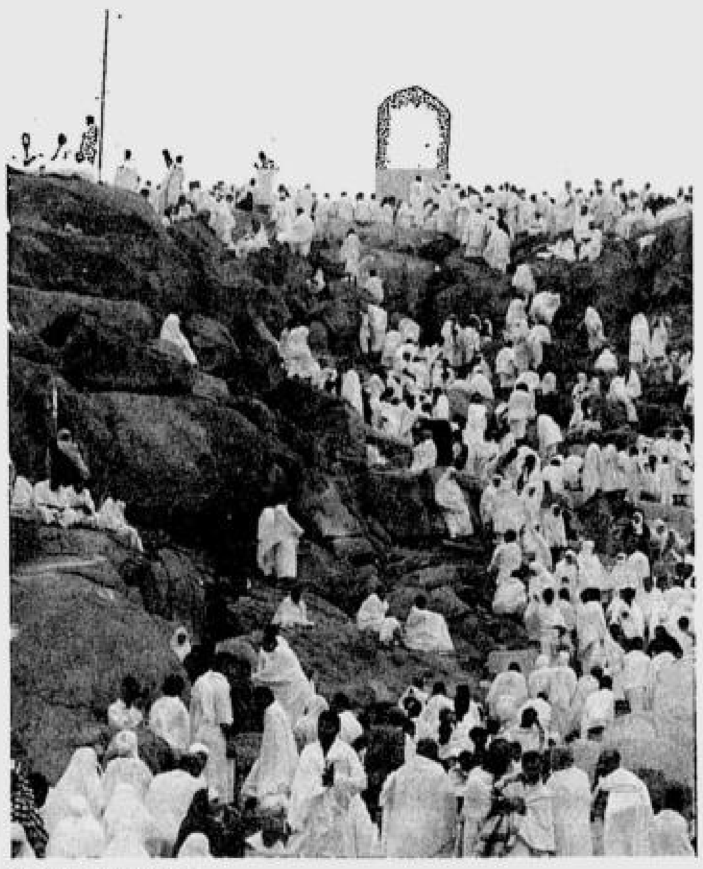
Zimbabwe

The US says the government of President Robert Mugabe, in a bid to remain in office at any price, has continued a campaign of violence against the opposition and passed a series of draconian security and media laws aimed at crushing political dissent.

Washington contends Mugabe's security forces and ruling party militias have killed, abducted, tortured, beaten, abused and raped government opponents. It says the government also has beaten, intimidated, arrested and prosecuted independent journalists.

Bush has imposed targeted sanctions against Mugabe, his governing elite and some businessmen closely associated with him or his party.

The state department said last year that some government policies are "contributing to the deliberate breakdown in the rule of law in Zimbabwe. *AP*



HAJJ CLIMAX

Muslim pilgrims ascend Mount Arafat as the annual hajj pilgrimage reaches its climax early Jan. 19. After performing the ritual symbolizing the Last Judgment on the mount, the pilgrims will return to the holy city of Mecca tomorrow, the first day of Eid al-Adha, or Feast of the Sacrifice during which most will sacrifice an animal, generally a sheep, in remembrance of Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son to God. AFP

US warns Iran over missiles

WASHINGTON—The Bush administration expressed concern on Tuesday about Iran's pursuit of longer-range ballistic missiles and imposed US economic penalties against Chinese companies it accused of helping Tehran in those efforts.

The penalties against the companies—which the Chinese government denounced as unjustified—were part of a broader campaign by the Bush administration to keep Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them. Iran denies its nuclear facilities are to be used to make weapons.

"I hope we can solve it diplomatically. But I will never take any option off the table," President George W. Bush told NBC television in an interview when asked about the potential for military action against Iran.

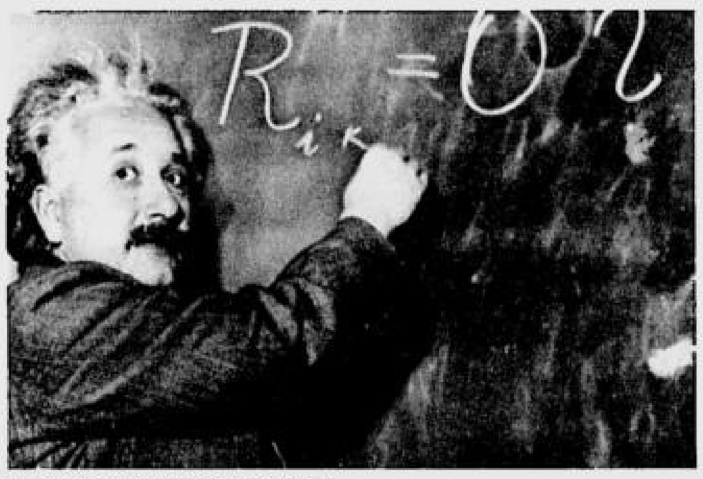
Bush told Fox News that Beijing has heard US concerns "loud and clear."

"We're gathering all the facts we possibly can. We'll make it clear— not only to China but elsewhere— that we'll hold you to account," he said.

"That's why we're dealing with the Chinese firms and that's why we're mindful of making sure the proliferation efforts are stopped at their source," Bush said.

Secretary of State-designate Condoleezza Rice said the administration may refer Iran to the UN Security Council to face possible international sanctions over its nuclear program if a "satisfactory understanding" is not reached.

"Nobody is saying that there have to be sanctions right away or anything of the sort. What we are saying is that Iran has to be held to account for its international obligations," Rice told lawmakers at her Senate confirmation hearing. *Reuters*



$E=MC^2$ ANNIVERSARY

Dr. Albert Einstein writes out an equation for the density of the Milky Way on the blackboard at the Carnegie Institute, Mt. Wilson Observatory headquarters in Pasadena, Calif., in this Jan. 14, 1931 file photo. On Wednesday, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder will open the German Einstein year 2005, remembering the 100th birthday of Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity. AP

Germany still relives the events of Auschwitz

BERLIN—Still deeply troubled by the indelible stain of Auschwitz, Germany has endeavored since World War II to ensure that the crimes of the Nazis are never minimized, historians and experts say.

Sixty years after the death camp in southern Poland was liberated, this painful part of Germany's past "resurfaces constantly, stronger today than in the post-war years," said Berlin historian Etienne Francois.

"Public awareness that the extermination of the Jews was of a singular nature is greater than in the 1960s," said Francois, from the capital's technical university.

"It can be seen more clearly by comparing it (public sentiment) with other similar phenomena elsewhere, like fascism in Italy or the Franco-era in Spain," he said.

According to Heinrich August Winkler, history professor at Humboldt University in Berlin, Germans have "to live with the fact that it was committed by Germans."

Francois described the Holocaust, and particularly the events at Auschwitz, where around 1.1 million people were killed from 1940 to 1945, as an "indirect trauma" for many Germans.

"Hardly anyone was a direct witness" to the events, he maintained, and the notion of what might have happened has given rise to a haunting "obsession" that the past might repeat itself.

Germany's struggle to never forget its past began shortly after the war, with the election in 1949 of the first president, Theodore Reuss, said Alfred Grosser, historian at the political studies institute in Paris.

But, Grosser said, public knowledge of the events remained sparse and many Germans, still traumatized by the war themselves, were reluctant to even raise the subject of such an unimaginable event. *AFP*

Series of car bombings kill 26 in Iraq

BAGHDAD—Insurgents detonated a truck bomb outside Australia's embassy in Baghdad on Wednesday and targeted police with car bombs, killing 26 people in at least four attacks ahead of Jan. 30 polls.

The US military said a car bomb attack near the Australian Embassy killed two Iraqis. Half an hour later, a car bomb near a hospital killed 18, including five Iraqi police. A police headquarters was nearby.

A third car bomb killed two Iraqi security guards near Baghdad's international airport, and a fourth killed two civilians and two Iraqi soldiers at a military complex in Baghdad, it said.

A police source said a bomb also exploded at a Baghdad bank, targeting police as they collected their salaries. But it was not clear whether this attack was included in the four detailed by the US military.

Iraqi police and the US military said seven people were wounded at the embassy. An official at the embassy said no Australian staff were killed, but two Australian soldiers were wounded.

"It was a car bomb aimed at the building where the security people are based. It was quite a substantial explosion," Australian Ambassador Howard Brown said.

Insurgents have repeatedly targeted Iraqi soldiers and police in the run-up to the elections with suicide bombings and ambushes. Iraqi forces are due to provide protection at polling stations on election day.

On Tuesday, Iraq's US-backed interim government announced a range of unprecedented measures to try to prevent bloodshed during the ballot, with land borders to be closed for three days and vehicles barred from getting close to polling stations.

Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi and the United States say the elections must go ahead, despite calls from many Sunni Arab politicians for a delay to try to win wider Sunni support for the ballot to choose a national assembly.

Iraq's 60 percent Shiite majority is eager for the election to take place as they are likely to emerge in a dominant position after years of oppression under Saddam Hussein. *Reuters*

Fossil sheds light on dawn of humanity

PARIS—Paleontologists say they have found a fossil haul from at least nine hominids who lived in eastern Africa more than four million years ago in the early chapters of human history.

The discovery was made at As Duma in Ethiopia's Afar region, near the border with Djibouti, they report in Thursday's issue of Nature, the weekly British scientific journal.

The find—mainly teeth, pieces of jaw, hand and feet—are dated as between 4.32-4.51 million years old and belonging to Ardipithecus ramidus, an enigmatic hominid whose remains were first found in the area in the early '90s.

A. ramidus has a strong claim to being the oldest forerunner of modern Man ever to be identified. In 2001, one specimen found in the Afar was carbon-dated at around 5.2 million years old.

Explorers elsewhere have separately found fragmentary hominid remains that, they say, predate A. ramidus, although these claims have been hotly disputed.

One is "Toumai," found by a French team in. Chad, which is put at between six and seven million years old, and the other is "Orrorin," found in Kenya in 2000, estimated at some six million years old.

The authenticity of A. ramidus has not been questioned, although very little is known as to his size and how he lived.

In the latest discovery, the scientists found the remains of monkeys, cow-like grazing animals and a creature called a mole rat, a rodent which lives in burrows in the savannah.

More intriguingly, they analyzed the carbon isotopes of the soils of the Afar, which points to the kind of vegetation that grew there millions of years ago.

The evidence points to a landscape that is very different from the dry, baked rift valley of today.

It was "a mosaic of environments" covered by woods and grassy woodlands, with lakes, swamps, springs and streams and local volcanic hotspots, the carbon findings suggest.

Some anthropologists say the habitat question is vital for understanding the rise of Man.

One theory is that the earliest hominids, as part of their genetic break with chimpanzees, were prompted to walk upright because they lived in the savannah, the wide African plain.

By standing up, they gained height in this flat, open landscape, which was an advantage for spotting prey and predators.

But the riddle remains unresolved.

"Only further evidence that more tightly associates the hominids (and other fauna) with the varied local environments will reveal the habitat preferences of these early hominids," the authors, led by Sileshi Semaw, of the CRAFT Stone Age Institute at Indian University, admit. *AFP*

FLYING IN STYLE

Virgin Atlantic mulls casinos, gyms

TOULOUSE, France—High-paying passengers aboard Virgin Atlantic's Airbus "superjumbos" will be able to work out in the gym, get a makeover, gamble in a casino then head to the bar for some cocktails before easing onto a double bed.

Virgin boss Richard Branson made the announcement Tuesday as he attended the official debut of the new A380 at Airbus headquarters in Toulouse, southern France.

Some of the Boeing 747s in Virgin's existing fleet are equipped with double beds for first-class passengers and bars where travelers can stretch their legs while sipping a beer.

But Branson vowed to extend the concept when Virgin takes delivery of its six A380s beginning in 2008.

"We plan to have a gym area for our passengers to stretch and work out during the flight," Branson said. "We're going to introduce a beauty parlor, we plan to have a casino."

The A380 can carry 555 passengers in a three-class cabin—one-third more passengers than a 747—with a lower operating cost per seat as well as much more cabin space left over for other amenities.

Airlines with upscale business models are likely to equip the plane with fewer seats to leave more space for lavish facilities and first-class berths.

At the other end of the scale, a budget carrier or charter operator serving busy holiday routes would be able to seat more than 800 passengers comfortably in a single coach-class configuration.

Most of the airlines that have ordered the A380 so far are keeping mum about what features they plan to offer on board.

Qatar Airways said Tuesday its A380s would seat just 490 passengers, but gave no details of its planned cabin layouts. Geoff Dixon, CEO of Australia's Qantas Airways, said its superjumbo cabin designs would be unveiled in the next few weeks.

With seats for 500 passengers, Virgin's A380 could be slightly less spacious than Qatar's, but founder and chair Branson suggested it might make up for that in other ways.

"We'll also have a lot more double beds, so alongside our casino you'll have at least two ways of getting lucky on a Virgin flight," he said. *AP*

WORLD'S OLDEST MOTHER

Adriana Iliescu, a 66-year-old Romanian, gave birth to a baby girl Eliza Maria on Sunday at the Giulesti Maternity Hospital in Bucharest, Romania, becoming the world's oldest recorded woman to give birth. AFP

China warns its nationals to avoid Iraq

BEIJING—China on Wednesday warned its public to avoid traveling to Iraq, as diplomats tried to win the release of eight Chinese laborers abducted by Iraqi insurgents.

"Please don't rashly go to Iraq, in order to avoid unforeseeable incidents," the Chinese foreign ministry said in a statement.

The eight abducted Chinese, including two teenagers, were shown in a video released Tuesday by insurgents.

The foreign ministry said it had asked for help from Iraqi religious leaders who helped to win the release of other Chinese abducted last year.

The official Xinhua News Agency said Chinese President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao were "concerned about the security" of the hostages and had ordered the foreign ministry and Chinese Embassy in Iraq to take "effective measures" to rescue them.

The latest abductees are from the southeastern coastal province of Fujian, which sends thousands of laborers each year to the Middle East and elsewhere.

Xinhua identified the eight men—all from Fujian's Pingtan County—as Zhou Sunqin, 18, Zhou Sunlin, 19, Wei Wu, 20, Lin Xiong, 35, Chen Qin'ai, 37, Lin Zhong, 38, Lin Bin, 39 and and Lin Qiang, 40.

They disappeared last week while leaving Iraq for neighboring Jordan, Xinhua said.

The insurgent group said the abducted Chinese had worked at American sites in Iraq.

Last April, seven men from Fujian were abducted while visiting Iraq in search of work and were later released unharmed.

China was scrambling to secure the release of eight of its nationals taken hostage and threatened with execution in Iraq as family members anxiously waited for news.

The foreign ministry said it was "taking all measures" to win their freedom and was contacting the Iraq Muslim Presbytery which helped in the release of seven Chinese kidnapped in the war-torn country last year.

"China is deeply concerned over this event," spokesperson Kong Quan said. "We hope they will be safely released as soon as possible."

The ministry warned Chinese nationals not to travel to Iraq, describing conditions there as "serious."

"Personal safety is not guaranteed. Chinese citizens are asked not to go to Iraq without clearly considering the situation," it said.

Kidnappers released footage to the Al-Jazeera network Tuesday of the eight hostages holding Chinese passports standing against a mud brick wall flanked by two masked gunmen.

The China Daily said they were from the Movement of the Islamic Resistance Nuamaan Brigade and had threatened to execute the men unless Beijing "clarifies its role" in Iraq within 48 hours.

"We captured these Chinese as they were trying to leave Iraq," the newspaper quoted one of the gunmen, holding a pistol and an AK-47 assault rifle next to the hostages, as saying on the video.

"Interrogations showed they worked for one of the Chinese companies helping to build American facilities in Iraq. *AP, AFP*

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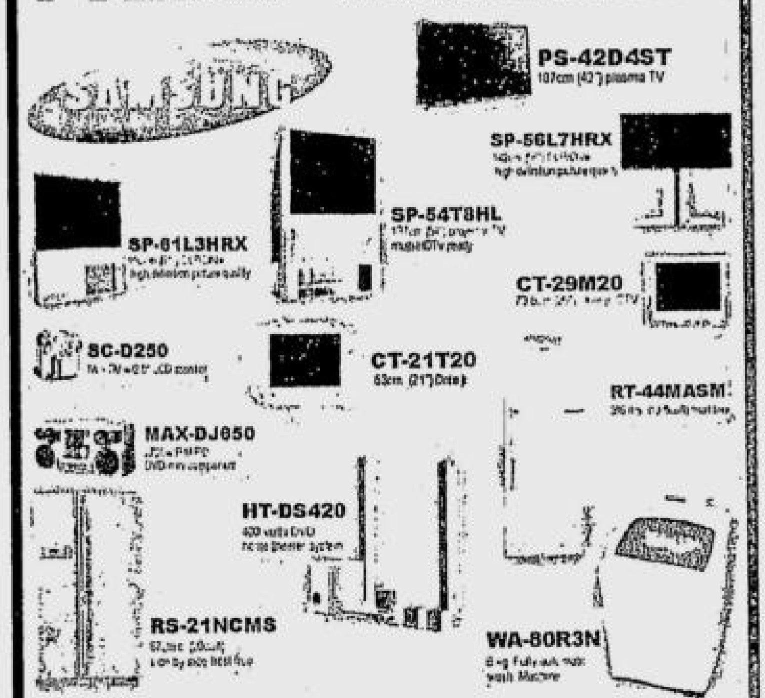

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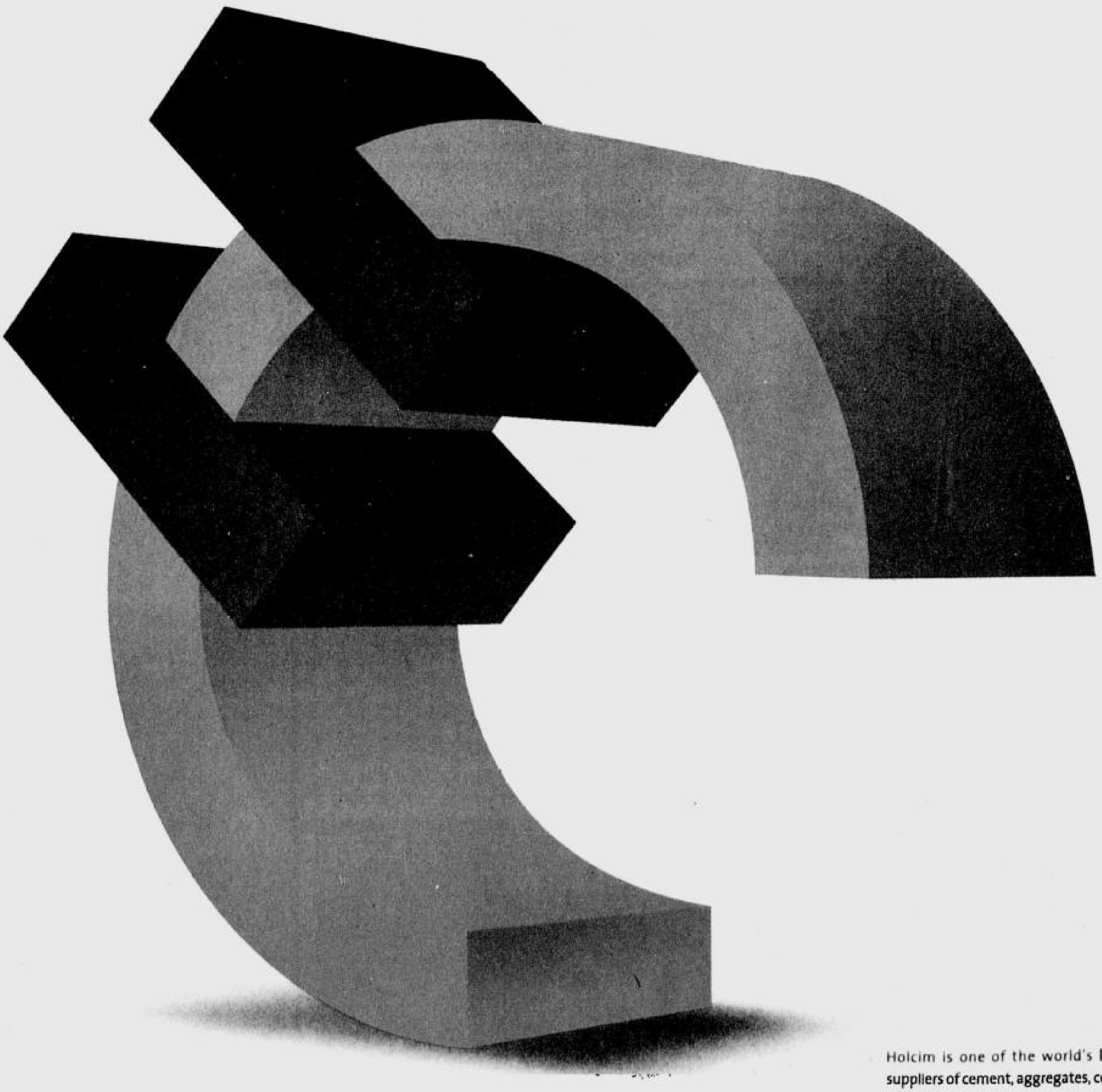

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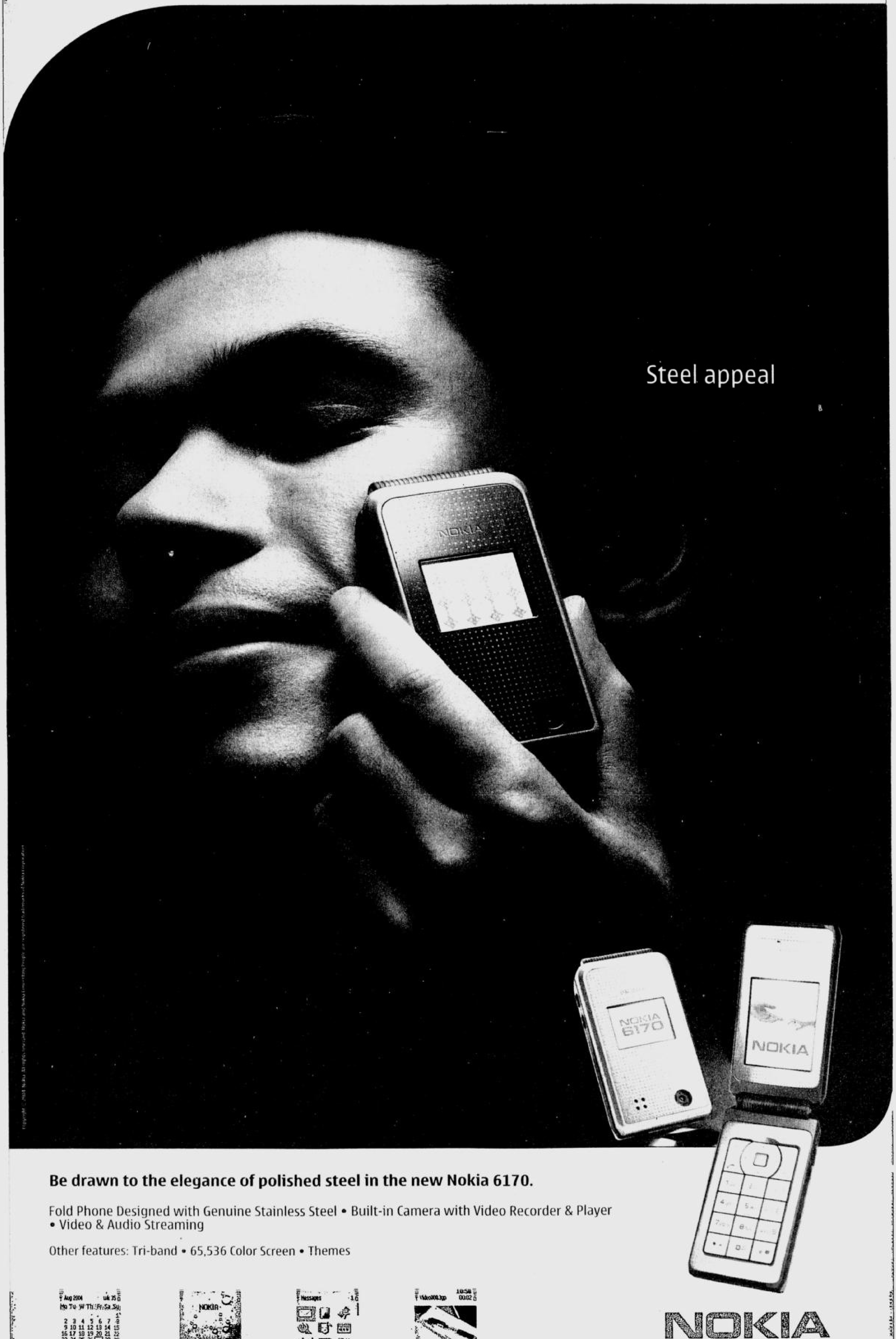

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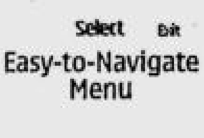

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OPINION

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Almost forgotten

EDITORIAL

FOUR years ago today, the Filipino nation repeated what it did in 1986 when it overthrew a dictator, a feat that was unprecedented, by ousting a corrupt president through a peaceful revolution. Edsa II was definitely one of the proudest moments in our nation's history.

But for reasons that are not so hard to understand, Malacañang chose to play down the celebration. A "simple thanksgiving Mass" on Jan. 16 was the lone activity lined up for the commemoration of that historic event. And it was held not even at the Edsa Shrine—where it happened, and as had been done in the first three Edsa II anniversaries—but inside Malacañang Palace.

Aside from President Macapagal-Arroyo and First Gentleman Mike Arroyo, only a sprinkling of Cabinet members and government officials were around for the "celebration." Conspicuously absent were the people for whom Edsa II was supposedly mounted. No one among the Edsa II masses and very few of the leaders who rallied them were invited. Even former Presidents Fidel V. Ramos and Corazon Aquino were not there.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the President wanted to keep the celebration subdued. If indeed, that was her intention, she certainly managed to make it also exclusive. And Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita only succeeded in coating the occasion with double-speak with his explanation: "She wanted the Mass held in Malacañang rather than outside to make an important symbolism that Malacañang is for the people."

The celebration was purposely made low-key because "a bigger celebration is being planned for Edsa I on Feb. 25," Bunye said. He didn't explain why Edsa I and Edsa II have to be jointly celebrated for the first time this year. But another newspaper quoted him as saying that for the Feb. 25 anniversary, it will be the Edsa People Power Commission that will decide if there will be a celebration.

Bunye might as well have said, "Leave it to the people to decide if they want to celebrate Edsa People Power," and he would have sounded more logical. Except that the people are clearly in no mood to celebrate the Edsa Revolution, and most surely not Edsa II. And this is because, since then, so little in our national life—if any—has changed for the better, even as so many things have gotten worse and continue to get worse.

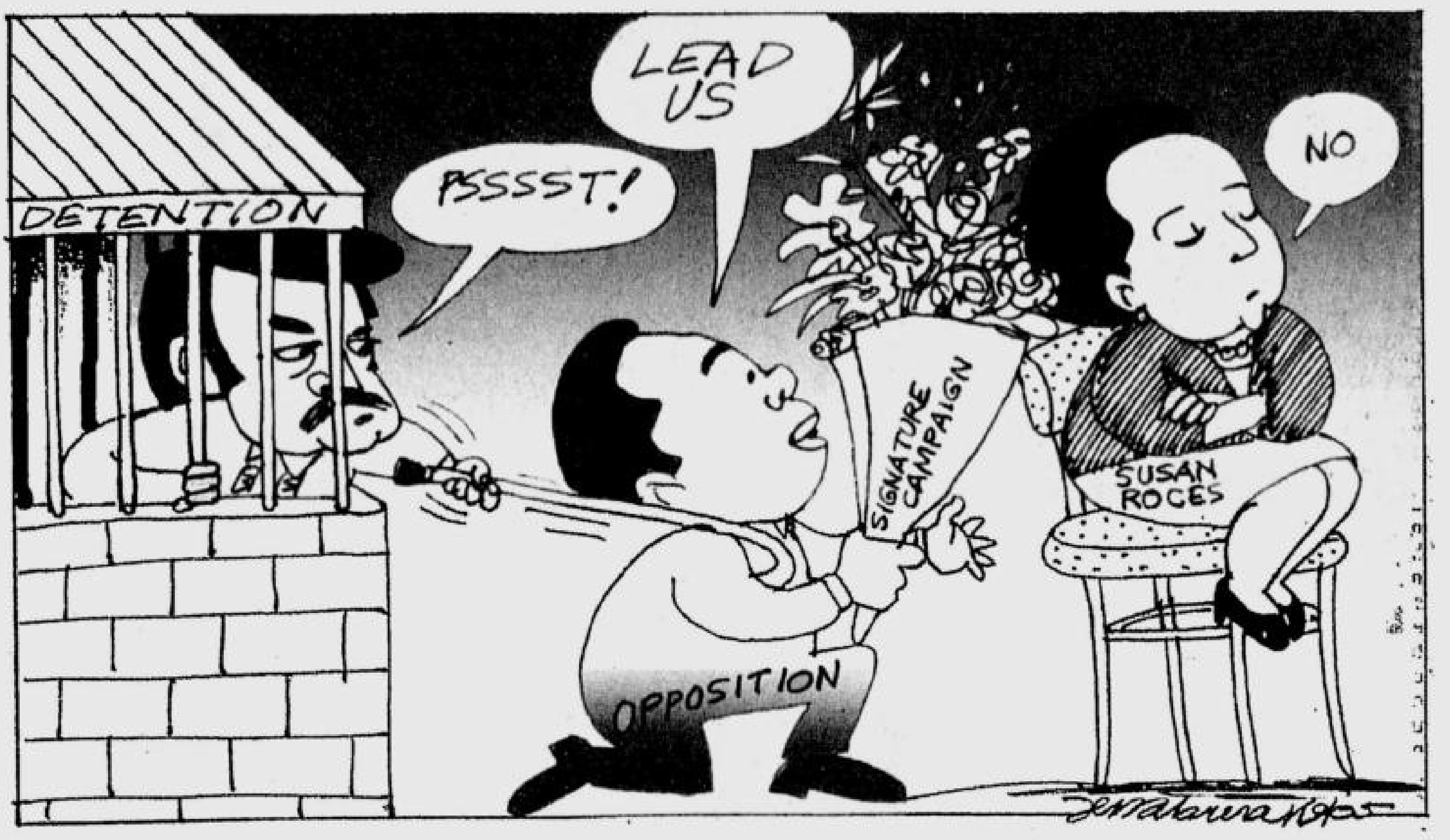
Corruption, the evil that Edsa II sought to exorcise, is still very much around. We don't need Transparency International, which ranked the Philippines among the top six most corrupt nations in the world, to tell us this. Each day that brings us farther away from Jan. 20, 2001, the deposed president, Joseph Estrada, instead of being brought nearer to the bar of justice, is treated more and more with kid gloves by the very people whom Edsa II brought to power. And this travesty of justice is being repeated in the administration's apparent lack of zeal and enthusiasm in prosecuting corrupt military officials, like retired Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia.

The President and her advisers seem to have forgotten that Edsa II was, more than anything else, an expression of the people's outrage against corruption. It was launched primarily to oust a corrupt and incompetent president, not to make her president. Ms Arroyo was almost incidental to the mass movement.

From Day One of her presidency, Ms Arroyo applied herself to realizing her ambition to win the highest office of the land on her own. This was obvious in her actions, most particularly her appointments, many of which were clearly intended to consolidate her political support. Instead of instituting reforms, she strengthened traditional politics and squandered the good will and fresh hopes she inherited from Edsa II.

In the last four years, the economy has gone from bad to worse, with the government stuck with a huge budget deficit and a fiscal crisis looming in the horizon. It hardly reflects well on her administration that the number of Filipinos leaving this country, which is so rich in natural resources, for unfamiliar, lonely and even dangerous places continues to grow.

But nothing speaks more loudly of the failed expectations of the people than that Estrada, whom Edsa II toppled, continues to wield political influence and can now even offer himself as a unifying force for the opposition, as if he had not been disgraced and driven out of Malacañang. There can be no greater indictment of the Arroyo administration than this.



Improbable tutorial

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

CAN tsunami-ravaged Banda Aceh in Northern Sumatra offer a tutorial for a press grappling here with heightened violence? Improbable? Read on...

Tidal waves drowned half of Serambi Indonesia Daily's 200 workers and flattened its presses. Serambi is one of 10 papers operated by PT Indopersta Primamedia. Nearest to the quake's epicenter, the paper was the hardest hit.

Yet, five days later, Serambi reappeared on newsstands. Edited by survivors, it was published from a small jerry-rigged plant in Lhokseumawe, a grueling five-hour drive from Banda. Tsunami slashed its circulation from 25,000 to 10,000.

"Sermabi published essential information on where to find food, medical help and news of relatives and friends," the World Association of Newspapers noted. "It is a saga of remarkable courage."

For two weeks following its comeback, Serambi was distributed free. Even in the best of times, the paper struggled as it publishes in a region wracked by a violent independence movement. Today, it's sold for 1,500 rupiah (16 US cents).

"How could they publish five days after the disaster, with half the workers lost and no ads?" asked Director Sentrijanto. "The answer is: they felt's it's their responsibility as the only local newspaper published in Aceh."

Serambi is a tale of rare journalistic grit. But for those who'd muzzle the press here, it's a stinging tutorial.

Assassination is the ultimate censorship. Since 1986, there have been 59 journalists murdered. (Martial law curbs prevented a body count during the Marcos dictatorship.) No triggerman, let alone mastermind, has been convicted. "Can we really say we enjoy freedom of the press when it must be practiced under the shadow of a gun?" editor Teodoro Locsin Jr. wondered aloud.

But these assaults recently metastasized into a more vicious form: arsonists are the new censors. Masked gunmen lobbed a Molotov bomb into a P35-million Outside Broadcast (OB) van of ABS-CBN. "Group K" owned up to the fire-bombing. It charged the network with "biased reporting" against the late Fernando Poe Jr. in the presidential elections.

Smarting from "living-high-on-the hog" reports while in Hong Kong, ousted President Joseph Estrada weighed in. He endorsed incendiary retaliation. The fire-ball should be "a lesson to the media who are one-sided," Estrada told the INQUIRER.

There are corrupt journalists, fumed the man necklaced with plunder charges. "Some of you are worse than *kotong* (mulcting) cops. *Kotong* cops go away when you give them money, some of your colleagues come back for more again and again." He should know.

A press card does not exorcise moral rot. And some newsmen serve as megaphones for the powerful. "A free press is not necessarily an angelic press," Judge Samuel King wrote.

We have professional lapses from inaccuracy, biased commentary to superficiality. Many "substitute easy cynicism for hard reporting." The current court case on the right of reply underscores that.

Serambi is about a craft demanding a commitment that, as Nobel Laureate Gabriel Garcia Marquez said, almost resembles the priesthood.

"Nobody...who is not ready to live only for the profession can survive in this incomprehensible and voracious craft," this Columbian editor and novelist wrote. Here, "the end product is finished when the story is done, as if it were the end of everything—but never leaves one in peace, because it restarts again, with even more ardor, the following minute."

That ideal prodded Serambi's decimated staff to restart the paper. It's the same "fire in the belly" that shaped the life work of journalists like Teodoro Locsin Sr., Mochtar Lubis, Joaquin "Chino" Roces, Katherine Graham, Jose Burgos Jr. and Tarzie Vittachi, among others.

Columnist Amando Doronila cited "three lessons" after Manila Times owners knuckled under Erap's pressure: "First, no president succeeded in gagging the press within a democratic system. Second, economic pressure and other forms of blandishment—including tax investigations—failed to silence it as an institution within a system of checks and balances. Third, it took a dictatorship to curtail press freedom but not completely."

Erap initially welcomed (later recalled it as a "joke") arson as a solution for press failings, real or conjured. This is consistent with his dislike for the media that could not be cajoled into subservience.

"Estrada interprets his conflict with the press in class terms," Asiaweek wrote in August 1999. "The oligarchies of this country, he says referring to wealthy media magnates, don't want me to succeed in my program to help the poor."

That rationale underpinned his failed drive to cripple the INQUIRER by getting "friendly" advertisers to back out. "What the President apparently wants is for us to publish only the good news," this paper editorialized. "We cannot do this just to be in the good graces of the President—or any president."

The Serambi Indonesia Daily's tutorial may strike a chord in the press here. But Erap's belated retraction of flame-throwers as redress for press grievances shows this example will be lost on this "leader of the opposition."

Not surprising. He can't even tell whether his name is Jose Velarde or what.

* * *

E-mail : juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph

Respite

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I'M a little blurry-eyed from having spent last Monday watching Day One of the Australian Open. For those who don't know it yet, or care, this is the 100th anniversary of that event—"100 Years In The Making" goes its title—a milestone for tennis and for the country Down Under. It sort of makes up for that Bush clone, John Howard, or makes you forget he's Up Over.

Not too many surprises on opening day, except that fifth-ranked Carlos Moya got booted out by countryman Guillermo Garcia-Lopez in four sets. In the course of the match, Moya repeatedly did to his racket what he probably wanted to do with himself, if not his opponent, which was to fling it violently to the ground out of disgust. Also, Ai Sugiyama of Japan and Mary Pierce of France lost to their foes, but neither has really been playing well over the last few years, so their loss stoked more sadness than shock.

Otherwise, it was par for the course. The only drama was offered by Paradorn Srichaphan of Thailand who played woefully but still managed to subdue an energetic but temperamental Potito Starace of Italy. I rooted for Paradorn, of course, the first Southeast Asian to have gotten this far in tennis—he's currently 28th in the world—though his game has gone up and down over the last couple of years. He can change from brilliant to clumsy in the blink of an eye. He was in his usual erratic form last Monday (our time) committing one unforced error after another. But he emerged victorious anyway when the smoke cleared.

I know someone said (I forget now what sport he was referring to—might have been billiards) that a champion's mettle isn't shown by how he wins with his best game but how he wins with his worst. That's the real test of character. But you wish some people would spend more time fighting their opponents than themselves.

My sentimental favorite Andre Agassi won in straight sets against German qualifier Dieter Kindlmann, showing he was none the worse for a hip injury that threatened to prevent him from joining his favorite Open: he's been champion there several times. The lopsided score, as the announcers pointed out throughout the match, did not reflect the long rallies and brilliant exchanges that marked it. Agassi by no means breezed through it, but he showed he was in fine form and still posed a threat to the junior citizens.

The ones who did breeze through and showed awesome form were Roger Federer and Marat Safin. Federer, in particular, by demolishing Fabrice Santoro 6-1, 6-1, 6-2. He's No. 1, and I think he'll be so for many years. He's only 23. I believed him when he said he was playing at another level right now and felt there was no one that could touch him. He was invincible last year, failing to add only the French Open to his Grand Slam bid. Neither Andy Roddick nor Lleyton Hewitt nor Safin, the second-, third- and fourth-ranked players respectively, gave him any trouble. He crushed Roddick and Hewitt a couple of times. Hewitt might have his countrymen smiling at him at the Australian Open, but Federer has the gods of Olympus doing so. His game is simply, well, at another level, the way Tiger Woods' and Michael Jordan's were. I personally think he'll surpass Pete Sampras before he fades into the sunset.

So I'll be a little more blurry-eyed in the next few days. I have cable TV to thank, or curse, for that. It's the only thing I'm keeping it for actually, apart from BBC and CNN. It's opened up new vistas on sports, including football. There's only one football, as one reader wrote me, which is the European one. "American football," which has little to do with the feet, is as much a misnomer as "Filipino restraint." But that's another story.

I wasn't always into sports. I hated PE when I was a kid, thanks in no small way to being asthmatic and preferring the world of books to the world of exertion. I thought then, with no small help from my elders but not necessarily betters, that Cassius Clay was just a loudmouth who did not know his place. His place being what White America said it was. It was only later that I would realize how great a sportsman he was: when he became Muhammad Ali and became champion in a game far beyond boxing, which was the game of life. To this day, I get goose pimples when I recall him lighting the torch at the Atlanta Olympics, his hands trembling violently and his clothes flapping in the wind, while all the world's athletes stood still, some with tears streaming down their cheeks.

That was what got me into sports, the beauty, drama and transcendence of it. A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's heaven for, as Robert Browning said, and nowhere does the striving seem mightier and purer than in sports. It's human beings tugging at the limits of the possible, straining to go beyond what their bodies allow. The horse is swifter, the elephant stronger and the tiger more agile, but it's the human being that has the capacity to go beyond himself, and grow. It's the human being whose effort to be swifter, stronger and more agile—or be better than what he is—makes him, well, human.

I wasn't drawn to sports for the escape it offered, though heaven knows these days that can be reason enough. I was drawn to sports, if only largely as a spectator, for the hope it offered that human beings could be better. The final struggle isn't really between one athlete and another, it is between one athlete and himself. At its best, sports shows not what humanity is but what it could be.

But that is getting too grand. Right now, all I want is some respite from work so I can spend nights watching that small ball whacked from side to side across the net by furious competitors. It helps, too, that the Russian belles add to the aesthetics....

Bush sets history

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

US President Bush will be inaugurated today for his second term. A professor of politics at the University of Virginia, Larry Sabato, who's writing a book on the 2004 US elections that pitted Bush against Sen. John Kerry, notes that no other second-term US president has started with such a slim margin of the popular vote or faced such a well-organized opposition. In fact, analysts opine that with the second Bush term, America is entering a new era of political opposition.

Sabato notes that aside from Bush, whose margin over Kerry was only 2.4 percent, two other US presidents had similar tiny margins: Grover Cleveland with 3 percent and Woodrow Wilson, 3.2 percent. Reports indicate that Bush is facing such a well-organized opposition from over half of the US population, mainly because of his Iraq war policy. Among them is a group called Women Against Bush that counts with over 5,000 dues-paying members in 47 states and many young people's organizations. Sabato opines that "the bitter divisiveness of the election means that Bush has little prospect of winning over those who opposed him."

* * *

The beauty of the US system, though, is that despite the bitter divisiveness and the plummeting rating of Bush, there is no danger that he would be ousted through extra-legal means. At worst, the Democratic Party will seek to recapture Congress in the mid-term elections of 2006 and field a strong candidate to win back the White House from the Republicans in 2008. In our Third World setting, with our weak political institutions and an opposition seemingly bent on recapturing power by means fair or foul, President Macapagal-Arroyo's popularity rating dips and already noises float about coups and "shadow cabinets." All these make for deplorable instability.

* * *

International credit rating agency Standard & Poor's downgraded RP's sovereign credit rating a notch lower, citing "government's inadequate response to its fiscal problem." Few were surprised, as there were enough warnings from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, foreign chambers and economic analysts, and the business community. Sadly, however, the Senate did not take those warnings to heart, and now it's trying to exculpate itself by blaming other agencies except itself.

* * *

I heard Sen. Ralph Recto on TV lamenting that the Senate was being blamed for it, but it was no secret that the credit rating agencies were closely watching if Congress would be able to pass several revenue measures. The House of Representatives passed five measures before it adjourned last year, but despite pressure from the House members and the public, the Senate only managed to pass the "sin" tax bill. The interminable debates in the Senate showed few members had any sense of urgency.

Much can be said, too, about the Palace's poor handling of the Senate. Given the predilection of a number of senators to ego-massaging, GMA should have used more people skills to woo them.

* * *

In an effort to make light of the downgrade, some senators say it would only cost P2 billion in additional interest rates; but think of what P2 billion could buy. The problem is that, as Bangko Sentral Governor Rafael Buenaventura stressed, now it's going to be tougher to access longer-term loan facilities in the international debt market. This could force RP to resort to shorter-term borrowing for the $4 billion it needs to raise this year. Recall that Argentina was forced to default because most of its debts matured in the short term.

* * *

What's bad is that the downgrade could have a domino effect. After such action by Fitch and S&P's, how will Moody's go? Moreover, this development is like a weather vane to foreign investors such as the California Public Employees' Retirement Fund (CalPERS), the largest US pension fund. The American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines, in its "Roadmap II More Foreign Investments" published last July, noted that foreign investment flows into RP appeared to have leveled off at about $1 billion a year. It pointed out that for a country of 84 million people with a low savings rate and serious infrastructure challenges, RP needs several times that amount. The AmCham believes that an inflow of $3-4 billion a year, levels that are closer to those of Malaysia and Thailand, is "an achievable goal" for RP which would stimulate substantial economic growth. We can only pray the recent downgrade won't discourage foreign investors.

* * *

Last Tuesday, I wrote about 12-year old Filipino violin prodigy and math wizard Joaquin "Chino" Sebastian Gutierrez, who's wowing his music and math teachers in Germany and reaping honors for RP. Currently enrolled in a high school in Munich and enjoying a violin scholarship, Chino bested German high schoolers in a math contest in Munich and will go on to the Bavaria-wide contest and hopefully the Germany-wide contest and then the international one. He also bagged first place in a violin contest and a speech contest in German.

But his scholarship doesn't come with a stipend. His father, a highly qualified computer management man, now earns 200 euros monthly, working at the RP consulate in Munich which is not even enough to pay for their apartment rental of 1,600 euros. Some relatives are chipping in, but it's not enough. One time, Chino got sick in the freezing winter because the family had no warm clothes.

I'd like to make an appeal to President Arroyo (who almost got to hear Chino at the Erda Foundation concert two years ago, except that the strings of his violin broke) to grant him a government stipend. Perhaps generous citizens can also help. Chino's aunt, Linda Sebastian, can be reached at Tel. No. 374-4345.

Karangalan, gathering time

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

THE BOULDERS in our hearts will quake and break open, the shroud of grief will lift and the sound of wailing will drift away. I make myself say that and believe it will happen indeed.

A terrible season has just passed, a more terrible one we should not expect, otherwise we would be mired in grief and hopelessness. But what is hope? It is not hope but mere passive waiting if there is no action, if there is no effort to restore the mountains that collapsed on us, or to find signs of life amidst the flotsam and the jetsam that were swept away and back into our lives. We cannot gripe forever in our comfort zones.

And so we go out and gather, otherwise we scatter.

Did the angels conspire and the gods inspire that now we see people gathering, bothering once again to seek solutions so that this obdurate and benighted nation would move forward and up? Does the Philippines have a future? Does the Philippines have a future with our generation?

The organizers of the Karangalan Conference/Festival "are confident that the Philippines has a future." When they say future, they mean good, bright.

After a litany of ills, hope comes hurtling: "Amidst the anger and frustration, there is also the reality of the other Philippines. This is the Philippines of moral strength, courage, vision, initiative, compassion, integrity, political will, socially-oriented businesses, artistic competence, social entrepreneurship, achievement and excellence. It is a reality that is here, right now. It is something not far away but already here in our midst, slowly but surely re-shaping the future of our country for the better." There.

This amazing future unfolds tomorrow, Jan 21. About 2,000 people are expected to join the three-day Karangalan Conference/Festival at the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

This conference is also a festival because those who will come will feast because, according to the organizers, last year, the Philippines became one of the most globally awarded countries in the world. Individuals and groups won no less than 10 of the highest global awards for their work in global justice, journalism, environment, culture, including music and areas of art, social threefolding as an approach to peaceful society transformation, sports, urban architecture, renewable energy and sustainable towns.

Spokesperson Nicanor Perlas said this will be the first time globally and nationally awarded Filipinos from the three key spheres of society—economy, politics and culture—are coming together to highlight and advance "the reality of another, much better Philippines." Perlas was a winner of the 2003 Right Livelihood Award, the UN Environmental Global 500 Award and the Outstanding Filipino Award.

I had to squint when I read the roster of speakers and the dazzling global awards after their names. *Lahat premyado.* Heavyweights. Honestly, I'd also want to listen to a really outstanding barangay captain. And I could not help thinking whether Aeta leader Carling has been invited to listen, this G-stringed find from the foot of Mount Pinatubo who has himself done a lot of speaking and reaching out to the original nations of the world. But I digress.

Karangalan means having honor and dignity; it comes from the word *dangal* or honor.

The goals of the conference (take a deep breath) are: to highlight and celebrate the striving and successes of many Filipinos for a better way of life and country; to empower Filipinos, through an experience of dozens of exciting initiatives, with a sense of vision and hope for our country and our country's future; to create a social space where diverse, prominent and little-known initiatives can come together and cross-fertilize each other; to enable participants and the larger public to have a glimmer of the present form and future possibilities of the visionary Philippines that is emerging in our midst; to encourage the launching of new initiatives for a better Philippines.

The participants will experience the reality of "the other, more hopeful Philippines" through lectures, workshops, exhibits and artistic performances. As far as I know, the convenor group, a mix of more than 20 NGOs and institutions, are not identified with any political party. Participants will have to pay a fee (at least P300 a day to cover costs) but students and the impoverished can get discounts. To know more, log on to www.truthforce.info.

Karangalan is not the only gathering this season. ABS-CBN recently convened the "Forum for the Filipino Future." And today, the three-day Global Filipino Networking Convention in Cebu City begins. Its call: "Enshrine yourself in the gallery of heroes. Join our stand in pushing our country forward." It's full-page ad in the INQUIRER has a girl asking: *"Reklamo…puro reklamo. Pero, 'Tay, ano ba ang nagawa n'yo para sa bayan?" Aray.*

Two weeks from now we will have the 2nd Philippine Summit of the News Media ("Media Nation 2: Owning Up.")

I noticed that media and telecommunications biggies are sometimes sponsors of big gatherings. And where one media or corporate giant is a sponsor, its major competitor is not likely to be there. ABS-CBN will not cover a GMA7-sponsored to-do and vice-versa. Incidentally, someone from ABS-CBN is co-emceeing at Karangalan. I hope the other networks will not excuse themselves.

Will this three-day Karangalan gathering go down to ground level? Yes, Perlas said, the participants will make ways to spread this awareness of "another, much better Philippines" that is in all of us.

And so, to the future indeed. Here's looking at you.

* * *

Send comments to cerespd@info.com.ph

Notes on Laurel

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

IN "A Changeless Land: Continuity and Change in Philippine Politics," David G. Timberman writes: "But there is also a strong strain of authoritarianism that runs through modern Philippine history. Two leaders of the rebellion against Spain—Apolinario Mabini and Emilio Aguinaldo—advocated authoritarian rule. Later Commonwealth President Manuel Quezon advocated 'one party democracy' and Jose Laurel, the president of the Philippines during the Japanese occupation, looked to Japanese-style Fascism as the solution to the Philippines' underdevelopment. Even Benigno 'Ninoy' Aquino, the leading opponent to Marcos' authoritarianism, is said to have believed that the successor to Marcos would need dictatorial powers to rebuild the country."

When the first Laurel Room was dedicated at Malacañang (today's Laurel Room is the actual bedroom he used), President Fidel Ramos was quoted as saying that the president he admired the most was Jose P. Laurel. This can probably be ascribed to what Ramos had read, or heard, about Laurel rather than to any personal affection.

Laurel was an Orientalist at a time when such an attitude was looked upon with horror. During the war, when he was already President, he would reminisce to a visitor that he had almost been expelled as a professor of the University of the Philippines, had it not been for the intervention of Rafael Palma. Laurel was said to have admired the code of *bushido* and felt that the moral fiber of Filipinos needed to be stiffened up, an attitude shared by many of his contemporaries who considered the younger generation of Filipinos (who would distinguish themselves during World War II) soft and too Americanized. Furthermore, he was president of the country during one of the most painful chapters of our history, carrying out his duties with resolve and a strong sense of purpose.

Laurel was an intellectual, a scholar, who had no illusions about politics as it existed in the Philippines. In his book "The State, Economic Transformation, and Political Change in the Philippines 1946-1972," Amando Doronila writes: "This amalgamation in the [1935] Constitution of contradictory tendencies—one leaning towards liberal democracy and the other towards authoritarianism—was appropriately described by Jose P. Laurel, a leading member of the convention… as the embodiment of 'important liberal principles ad socialistic tendencies' suitable to the Philippines."

Laurel therefore always retained a rather detached perspective toward one of his main occupations: politics. He was an exponent of the view that the duties and obligations of citizens needed to be stressed more. This has given rise to the interpretation that he represented the tendency of Filipino leaders to have an open mind when it came to quasi- or outright-dictatorships.

Nevertheless, when he finally had a chance to run the government, the Constitution that was written embodied an attitude toward government that must have been dear to Laurel's heart (the fact that it was never really operative and that it reflected the needs of the times all considered). In his memoirs, Proceso Sebastian, a UP College of Law classmate of Laurel's, who shared with him the characteristics of probity and impeccable service to the government, summarized the Laurel Constitution which he helped draft:

"[The] constitution provided for a strong and powerful president, as compared to the powers granted the chief executive in the 1935 Constitution. The President appoints the ministers, members of his cabinet; justices of the Supreme Court; army and navy officers… provincial governors, city and municipal mayors; ambassadors… heads of bureaus… Besides his power of appointment, supervision and control, the President may also promulgate rules and ordinances, in cases of urgent necessity and the Assembly is not in session. This gives him tremendous powers as the Assembly meets only once a year for 60 days.

"The legislative power would be vested in the National Assembly with the governors and city mayors as members ex-officio. Since these officials are appointed by the President, all legislation would practically be under his control. While the system is semi-parliamentary since the President is elected by parliament, the cabinet, appointed by the President, need not be dissolved when it loses the confidence of the National Assembly. Although the National Assembly elects the President, he can only be removed by impeachment through a two-thirds vote of the Assembly, tried by the Supreme Court and convicted by… vote of the justices…"

And most important of all, "This constitution gives more importance to the duties and obligations of a citizen rather than to his rights."

This doesn't mean Laurel wasn't a genuine believer in democracy, because he was. Rather than make things worse by encouraging a revolt being contemplated by his followers in Batangas, he conceded the 1949 election to Elpidio Quirino (choosing to exact his revenge by backing Magsaysay, which happily also restored the people's faith in election in 1953).

Now what does declaring his admiration for Laurel say about Ramos, the president?

The most obvious assumption is that, as an outsider, politics-wise, he appreciated the detachment and rational attitude toward politics that Laurel displayed. Laurel's belief that the rights of citizens had been emphasized too much, to the detriment of the realization of duties and obligations that keeps a society well-knit and productive, is an attitude shared by many in private, if not public, life.

* * *

Comments welcome at www.quezon.ph

When disaster strikes

YOUNG BLOOD

Omer R. Navaid

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

WHEN disaster strikes, our first reaction is always to ask, "Why?" But the question really should be: "What can I do to help?"

On Dec. 29, 2004, my family decided to tackle the latter question head-on. That day at exactly 5 a.m., we embarked on our own relief mission in those areas of Quezon Province devastated by the typhoon. It was an experience that we would never forget.

When we started out, none of us realized how bad it was over there. The storm hit the area over a month earlier and the signs of destruction were still everywhere. The roads were still quite treacherous. Giant boulders and huge mounds of earth still littered the roads, which remained covered in mud. One of the vehicles that came with us (brought by David and Ann Munns, a British couple) kept skidding in the mud. These roads run alongside mountains, so you don't ever want this to happen. We had some tense moments, indeed.

We also saw parts of the road that had just fallen off the mountain. These places did not look safe at all. Needless to say, it was a very nervous drive.

When we reached the towns, our hearts just broke. Houses had either been washed away or buried in mud. Those landslides must have been tremendous. People were walking around knee-deep in mud. We couldn't even get out of the car when we were in the town; the mud was just too deep.

I think the worst part was that you could actually smell death in the air. The smell of the corpses was still there. Over a thousand people had died in the disaster, I believe.

When we see events like these on television, they never seem to be that bad. But actually being there made us realize how terrible the situation was. This used to be such a beautiful place. It's really such a shame.

In one town, we met up with one of the relief coordinators who told us about his experience during the storm and the following days. He said the water rose 12 feet high in some parts of town. The worst part, he said, was seeing people walking around wet, naked, disoriented, not knowing where other members of their families were.

After the storm, he continued, many died from shock or depression. People would try to dig out their houses from the mud, and when they realized their efforts were useless, they suffered heart attacks and died.

Demand for big fish or crabs in the area had gone down to zero, because people believe them to be carnivorous and think they were eating the bodies that were washed out into the ocean, he added.

The beach had changed so much. All we could see on the beach now were miles and miles of logs and debris. I guess the landslides carried the trees out into the ocean and then the tides eventually brought them back. Mother Nature really amazes me sometimes.

Handing out the relief goods was the most positive part of this whole experience. The caretaker of our relatives' beach house called over all the people from the neighborhoods who, he thought, needed help badly, and they all came right away. Each relief package we had put together contained rice, sardines, corned beef, coffee, juice, sugar, new and old clothes and personal care products.

It seemed that we were giving a lot more than some relief organizations we saw, and this was very much appreciated by the people. But it was really just a drop in the bucket. There's still so much that they need. I suppose something is always better than nothing.

The best part was seeing their faces light up after we handed them their relief packages. They even sang for us. We must have brought them some happiness, even if only for a short time.

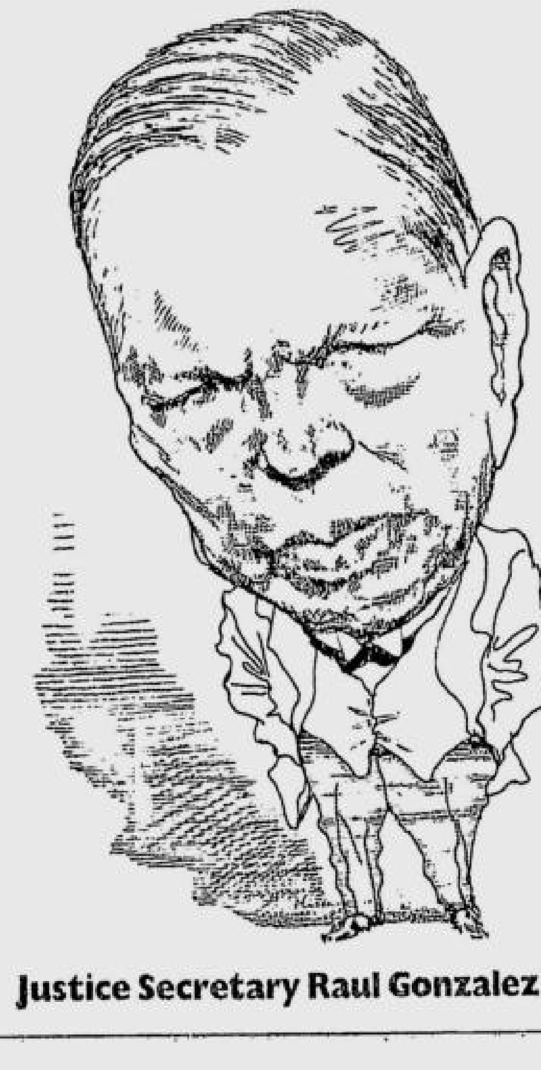
We had some toys wrapped up, so we were even able to give the little kids some Christmas presents. And watching these kids jump up and down in delight after getting a present was for me worth all the dangers we faced during our journey.

We had to leave at 3 p.m. because we didn't want to go through those scary mountain passes at night. (Even now, I don't think it's a good idea for my relatives to go there. They should wait until those roads are fixed and stabilized for good.)

I suppose that's how life is. It's so unpredictable. We were all in shock; the experience was almost numbing. That day was such an eye-opener and I can't stress enough how lucky we all are to have what we have. Now I can appreciate much more everything that I've got.

Omer R. Navaid, 20, is a third year year advertising student at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He was in the country during the Christmas break and helped in his relatives' relief operations in Quezon.

IN THE NEWS



Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez

Is there a Filipino intelligentsia?

IS the concept of a Filipino intelligentsia at all plausible? Or is it "un-Filipino" in a society where the stomach is king?

Does this group of intellectuals and knowledge workers exist at all? Is it at the forefront of intellectual thought in science, the arts, culture, technology, the academe and politics?

Or must we hunt for these beings with the intense enthusiasm of astronomers searching for extra terrestrial intelligence? Are these creatures to be found in planets such as Starbucks and Seattle's Best?

Do they, like the ancient Greek Pythagoreans, gather in secret locations for fear of persecution by the jaded masses, there to revel in their shared knowledge? Are they the "educated derelicts" scoffed at in a famous ode to materialism, which boasts that only persistence and determination guarantee worldly success?

Is the Filipino intelligentsia composed of the widely read and seemingly omniscient political columnists? The stentorian TV newsreaders that reflect their network's bias for tawdry journalism? The politicians who have facile comments on any issue that hogs the headlines? The rich? The richly educated? The long-suffering middle class that props up the economy but which receives a pittance in return? The religious orders steeped in arcane learning? Or is it "all of the above"?

And who are the leading lights of this invisible stratum of society? The "*illustrados*" had Jose Rizal, Marcelo H. del Pilar and Graciano Lopez Jaena. Who speaks for the Filipino intelligentsia of today? Who are its thinkers? And where can one read about their multitude of opinions, and of the necessary conflict of ideas that marks an intelligentsia?

Who are these people?

Without an intelligentsia, who is there to speak out with authority on those complex issues that bedevil the Filipino? Who will wield the intelligentsia's power of using knowledge to goad governments and corporations into positive action? In this Information Age, why are Filipinos who are supposed to know more, afraid to show society that they know more?

Is knowledge a scarlet letter?

Perhaps, a Filipino intelligentsia does exist. But nothing has been heard of it. Perhaps it's because intellectuals prefer to work muted in the background. However, there is truth to that centuries-old observation that the true aim of education is not knowledge but action.

The Filipino intelligentsia must take action by using its vast knowledge to make sense of the world around us. It must proudly announce its existence. It must assert itself as the brains of this nation—against the strident voices of loud amateurs, rabble-rousers, hedonists and politicians of whatever ideology.

Where is the Filipino intelligentsia?

—ART VILLASANTA,
anakpeftok@mailcity.com

Frying customers in their own fat

I JUST want to share my experience with a telecommunications company. A lot of my friends and acquaintances have the same complaint.

I am referring to the company's business strategy of sending ring tones, logos, etc. to unsuspecting subscribers at cost to the latter. In my case, I always receive ring tones every Saturday and Sunday, without my requesting them, for a minimum charge of P30 each. A small amount, maybe, but the issue here is honesty in dealing with customers.

Once you get a ring tone as advertised in the newspaper, chances are you will receive ring tones daily or weekly, at your expense, of course. Usually you would become a contestant in its raffle promo without voluntarily registering for the same. More than half of my load is wasted paying for those unwanted ring tones.

I often send messages to its hotlines to stop the onslaught of those unwanted ring tones, and I even sent a complaint to one of its distinguished officers but to no avail. I always send "OFF" to appropriate numbers but the same has no positive result. Its customer service numbers are also useless and the responses are obviously pre-programmed and absolutely not responsive to a particular problem.

The other disgusting part is that the ring tones I receive are undesirable. I hope the other telecommunications companies do not have the same strategy of frying customers in their own fat.

—ANGELITO DE OCAMPO CUETO,
Bulacnin, Lipa City,
Batangas 4217

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
LETTERS

True spiritual guide and leader

FR. Jerry Orbos writes with the hand of a true, great spiritual leader. He deserves the highest award that our country can confer on a writer or artist. I particularly appreciate his explanations and originality.

If 10 percent (only 10 percent) of our churchgoing wealthy Filipinos will read and follow his counsel and sermons, our country will yet be a better place to live in.

I want to purchase several copies of his book (a collection of his INQUIRER articles) and distribute them to friends, but bookstores in the province do not have them.

—SERGIO DIZON,
PO Box 52479,
Mabalacat, Pampanga

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Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Role of faith in our lives

WAS the tsunami that hit and killed tens of thousands in Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Maldives, Myanmar and other nations an act of God?

The Archbishop of Canterbury a few weeks ago said that people should ask the question but, to my disappointment, he did not give any answer.

Imams in Indonesia were quoted in the local papers that the tsunami was a "wake-up call" from God who was "displeased because the people were not faithful to their duties as set forth in the Koran. Another Imam said that it was God's punishment because Muslims were killing Muslims in Aceh. If that is so, why were non-Muslims also drowned? Why were tourists—who we assume had not killed anyone, fellow Christians or not—in Phuket massacred by the tsunami?

The better view, in my opinion, was that made by Jonathan Sachs, the chief rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, based in the United States. He said that the tsunami is but a natural calamity that is a consequence of our having been placed in a physical world.

I have yet to read our Catholic theologians speak out on the matter.

Bishop Ted Bacani had, indeed, written a challenging piece "O God, how could you?" which appeared Jan. 4 in Today. He called the tsunami, "*a cariño brutal*" (brutal caress) from God. I think that the thrust of his article is that in the end, God wills that people's love as is now manifested by the outpouring of support from all over the world, will triumph over the tragedy.

But in the scheme of things, is a catastrophe in the magnitude that the tsunami wrought, necessary just so love could surface and triumph in the end?

I suppose that cosmic necessities are epochal events that only God decides. But this is only a supposition from a layman whose knowledge of things divine is mainly sourced from basic catechetical levels.

Unless explained more sensibly, the tragedy could be deemed a mass murder along the lines of the Nazi or Khmer Rouge killing frenzies in the not too distant past but with no Hitler or Polpot to blame. A criminal-less crime, then?

In a predominantly Christian country such as ours, I guess the question acquires transcendental importance that our spiritual leaders should speak out on, at least, for the edification of their flocks.

It won't do for religious fundamentalists to mouth the trite and facile dicta that God has punished the sinners in those countries. I am sure there are worse sinners in this country and elsewhere in the world that the tsunami spared. Moreover, in 1755 an earthquake devastated Lisbon where over 100,000 died and the disaster apparently did not distinguish between the sinners and the saints in that holy Catholic land!

We probably cannot expect an answer that will satisfy all our doubts. That is why faith plays a heavy role in our religion so that what cannot be answered with facts and figures, we take by faith.

—SEN. AQUILINO PIMENTEL JR.,
6/F Senate of the Philippines,
GSIS Bldg., Roxas Blvd., Pasay City

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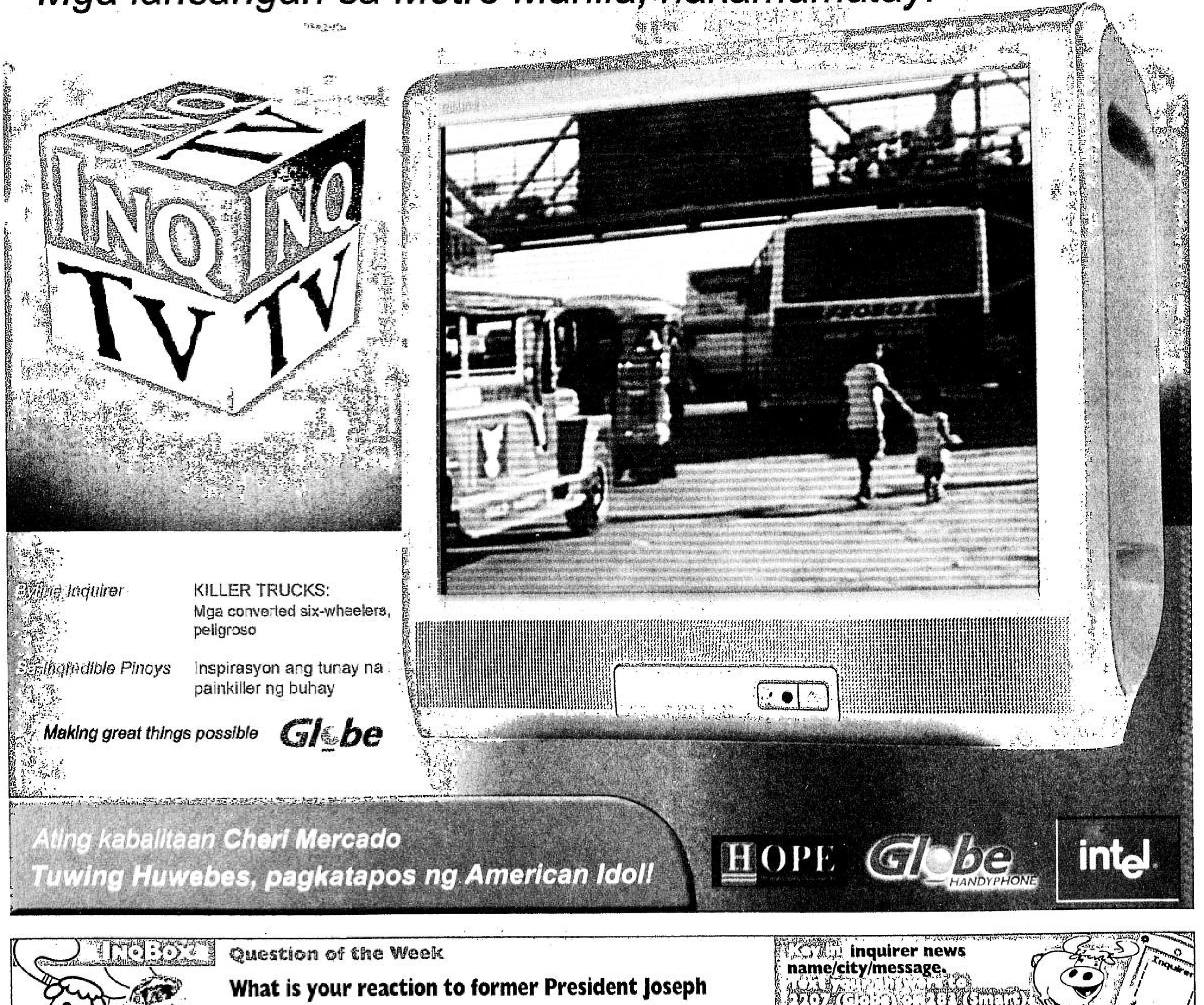

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Warehouse of ex-congressman yields illegally cut lumber

ATIMONAN, Quezon—An estimated 70,000 board feet of undocumented newly sawn lumber were seized yesterday morning by government forces from the warehouse of a former Quezon congressman in Barangay Tagbakin in this coastal town facing Lamon Bay.

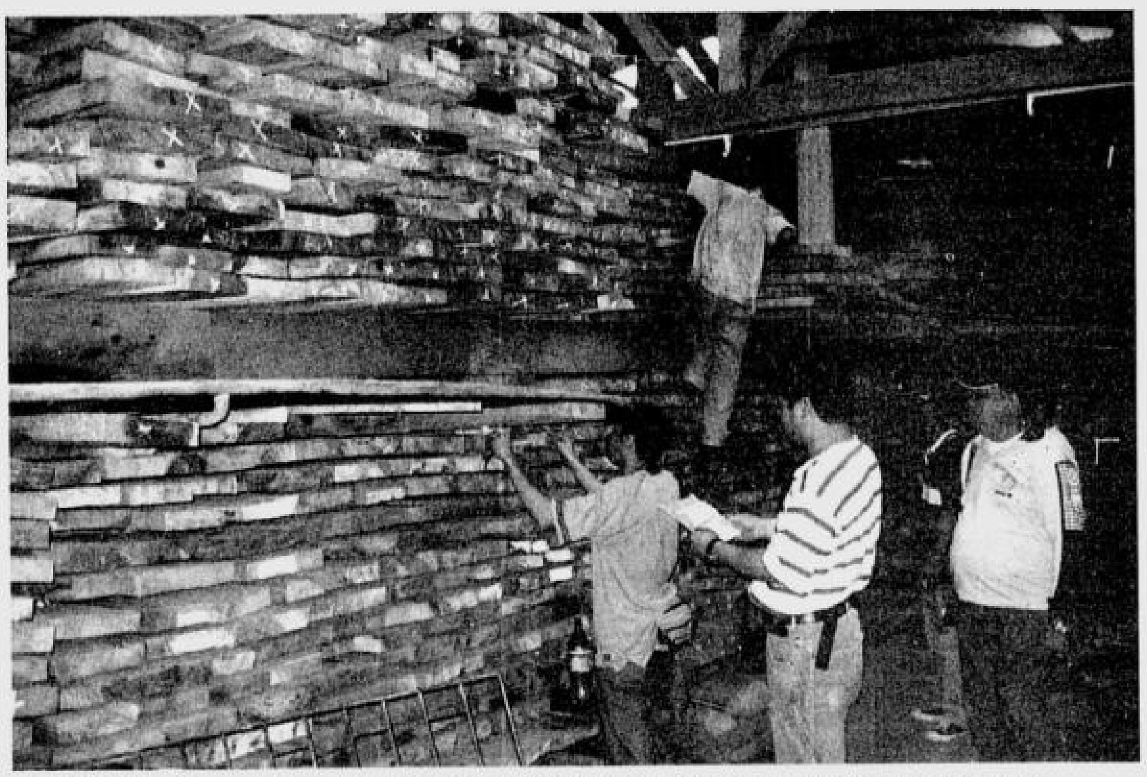
Led by retired Army Lt. Gen. Alfonso Dagudag, who has been appointed by President Macapagal-Arroyo to head the government's anti-illegal logging campaign, the raiding team, armed with a search and seizure order issued by the Regional Trial Court in Gumaca town, swooped down on the Superlines Bus company terminal at around 7 a.m.

Once inside the terminal, the group—composed of elements from the local police, National Bureau of Investigation and Department of Environment and Natural Resources—discovered stocks of assorted newly sawn lumber from red and white lauan trees inside a stock area for bus spare parts and lubricants in one corner of the vast compound.

The raiding team also found another pile of lumber in the other corner of the terminal.

The Superlines Bus company was known here in Quezon as owned by former Quezon fourth district Rep. Manolet Lavidez.

Dagudag immediately left the place, along with Manila-based news reporters, after the successful operation, according to team members.



GOVERNMENT agents inspect newly-sawn lumber in a warehouse said to be owned by a former congressman.

DELFIN MALLARI/PDI SOUTHERN LUZON BUREAU

Lawyer Celso Ginga, NBI-Quezon chief, said a concerned civilian tipped their operatives on the presence of newly sawn lumber inside the terminal.

He said that after they verified the veracity of the information, they immediately coordinated with the DENR and the Anti-Illegal Logging Task Force.

Emrich Borja, DENR-Quezon chief, said his office had also received the same information.

"We're also about to conduct the raid when the NBI coordinated with us. We're also targeting that place," he told the INQUIRER.

He estimated the worth of the seized semi-processed forest products as more than P2 million.

The seized items were hauled in several 10-wheel trucks toward the MP Woodcraft Compound in Barangay Villabota in Gumaca for temporary safekeeping prior to the filing of appropriate criminal charges.

Lawyer Ernesto Adobo Jr., DENR regional executive director and who led the DENR team, said the owner of the bus terminal will be charged with violation of Presidential Decree 705 or the Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines.

"There were no documents that would support legal ownership of the lumber," Adobo said.

However, one Josefino Vargas, who introduced himself as consultant and administrator of Superlines, clarified that Lavidez was not the sole owner of the transportation firm. He said the bus company was owned by ACRE Development Corp., which was principally owned by one Angeles Talampas and his spouse and Lavidez.

"But they were not involved in the gathering of logs, which we have sawn into lumber," Vargas said. He said Lavidez was in Manila.

Vargas admitted that it was his decision to gather and buy drifted logs from coastal residents to be used in the repair of company bus terminals in Atimonan, Legazpi and Manila.

"We bought the logs for P11 per board foot. All of the logs were washed ashore," he said.

He said his men were the ones who sawed most of the logs into lumber of different sizes.

Chief Insp. Ronnie Miralles, Atimonan police chief, said residents along the coastal villages were all busily involved in the gathering of drifted logs.

"Most of the hardware and lumber store here no longer have business selling lumber for local construction needs. They are now being supplied by the coastal residents," he said.

Adobo said they would also conduct operations against several suspected sawmills along the coast of the Lamon Bay area.

"It's hard for illegal log haulers to transport their illegal stocks this time. The routes are saturated with checkpoints since we declared a ban on the movement of logs and other forest products from this province," the DENR official said. *Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

More experts sent to study meningo in Baguio

BAGUIO CITY—The World Health Organization has sent more of its experts to study the meningococcemia cases in the city.

"The WHO team will be here to find out and understand why meningococcemia is the predominant form of meningococcal disease that spurred in most of the suspected cases [taken] to the hospital," said Dr. Eric Bertherat, an epidemiologist of WHO based in Geneva, Switzerland.

Five more WHO experts will arrive this week to join Bertherat and four other colleagues at the meningococcemia command post at the Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center.

New strain

Dr. Luningning Villa, spokesperson of the command post, said there were no cases reported to them from Jan. 14-18.

Bertherat said there is a strong possibility that the *Neisseria meningitidis*, the bacteria causing meningococcal diseases, in Baguio may be a new strain.

He said of the 13 serogroups (types) of N. meningitidis, eight are pathogenic strains (serogroups A, B, C, X, Y, Z, W-135 and L). However, most meningococcal disease is due to serogroups A, B, C, Y, and W-135.

The initial laboratory finding in the cases in Baguio showed that these were caused by serogroup A.

Villa said determining the real pathogenic strain of the bacteria in Baguio is important because this would be the basis of decisions on what vaccine has to be produced.

Laboratory process

"It's more on laboratory procedures," she said.

Villa said there is no need to get another vaccine for those who took one even if WHO would say that there is indeed a new strain in Baguio.

Bertherat also warned against mass vaccination.

"It's not necessary," he said, adding that the situation in Baguio is already contained and the last cases were sporadic.

Even if all Baguio residents would take chemoprophylaxis or antibiotics to kill the bacteria, the city, or any other city for that matter, will not be meningococcemia-free, Bertherat said. *(See related story on p.17)*

"It exists in 10 percent of all adult population," he said.

Baguio residents have also shed their praningococcemia (paranoia from meningococcemia reports) attitude with only a handful now wearing surgical masks.

Foreign tourists have also returned to Baguio.

"I think Baguio is still safer than the beach," said an Italian couple undergoing healing sessions with Baguio-based faith healer Martin Caoili.

Caoili said he and the 30 members of the Baguio Healers Association took their foreign patients to Baguio to show that the city is safe.

In an advisory released by the Department of Health, Dr. Edgardo Sabitsana, director of the Bureau of Quarantine and International Health Surveillance, said no airline or foreign government has required travelers from Baguio to present a certificate of chemoprophylaxis or vaccination against meningococcemia. *Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Team formed to stop oil slick in bay

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—The provincial government of Sarangani is set to create a task force to contain oil slick in Sarangani Bay.

Ismael Andang, provincial environment and natural resources officer, told the INQUIRER that the plan to create a task force was brought out after Sarangani governor Miguel Dominguez conducted an aerial survey of the oil slick in the bay.

Among the primary tasks of the body included determining the main source of oil slick and mapping out plans to contain it.

The 345-square kilometer Sarangani Bay was declared a protected seascape by former President Fidel Ramos in 1996.

Dominguez conducted an aerial survey after receiving reports spilled oil is polluting a portion of Sarangani Bay.

The governor claimed that the slick is very visible in the 5-kilometer stretch of Sarangani.

"Maybe, this (oil slick) is the reason why a pilot whale was stranded along the coast of Barangay Ladol early last week," the governor said.

He said he suspected that the dry dock facility, canning factories and the thousands of fishing vessels docked at the city's fish port complex were the main sources of the oil slick.

Aside from creating a task force, the provincial government would also launch an information campaign to increase the level of awareness of people on the importance of protecting Sarangani Bay. *Aquiles Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Corpus urged to help manage quarrying

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Calls for retired Lt. Gen. Victor Corpus, chair of the state-owned Natural Resources Development Corp., to help manage the multibillion-peso sand industry in Pampanga stepped up Wednesday from among quarry operators and local officials.

At least three holders of sand and gravel quarrying permits lauded Corpus' plan to raise more income for the province and for the national government's reforestation program.

In separate calls to the INQUIRER, they said it was high time for the national government, through the NRDC, to put order and transparency into the industry that thrived on the sand that Mt. Pinatubo's eruptions spewed out in 1991.

The quarry operators spoke on condition of anonymity, citing possible reprisals from government regulatory offices that had processed their permits.

Illegal operators, they said, encroach on their sites and sell sand cheaper. While they spend large amounts of money for taxes and for complying with technical requirements, they said illegal operators cheat on taxes, spending only for earth-moving equipment and trucks.

One said the failure of the provincial quarry task force, chaired by Gov. Mark Lapid, in regulating the extraction of sand has posed environmental risks.

Quarrying is done near the foot of the P3.6-billion FVR Megadike while some operations are done on the edges of rivers, causing erosions in sugar, rice and vegetables farms there.

"Corpus should go ahead and not be intimidated by the threats of Sen. [Manuel] Lapid, his son [Governor Lapid] and their minions," one of the operators said.

"Corpus should get the quarry industry out of the control of the Lapids," said another.

A barangay official called the INQUIRER to say Corpus should consider making villages benefit from the plan.

"We have not been getting our proper shares [of taxes]. The little that comes is remitted late. We are either at the mercy of capitol officials or mayors who allow illegal quarrying. They won't even show us a collection report," the village official said.

Vice Gov. Joseller Guiao supported Corpus' proposal, saying the task force had defaulted in its responsibility to improve collections.

Of last year's P20-million target, only P10.5 million was collected, Guiao said. At least P8.5 million went to the capitol's coffers, the rest to towns, cities and villages hosting operations.

Corpus vowed to put in a minimum net revenue of P36 million annually, with a guarantee of increase over time depending on the number of trucks.

In 1999 when the NRDC first took over the quarry industry, the agency grossed P150.4 million from 509,805 trucks. Last year's collections represented an average of only 150 trucks monthly, indicating irregularities in collections.

Governor Lapid, who is still in the United States, told the INQUIRER in an earlier interview that he had been exerting his best efforts to improve the monitoring and collection system.

"I admit we're having a hard time," he said. "Anybody in his or her right frame of mind would find General Corpus' proposal very advantageous both to the provincial and national governments," Guiao said.

He said the planned venture with the NRDC did not mean surrendering the provincial government's ownership of the resource.

The Lapids are invoking the Local Government Code of 1991 in citing the authority of the provincial government to collect quarry taxes. Using that argument, the elder Lapid won two cases in local courts, parrying attempts by both the Estrada and Arroyo administrations to regulate the industry.

Pampanga Rep. Reynaldo Aquino favored NRDC's offer, saying it "obviously was a much better deal for the province considering the much higher income it will get from the quarrying operations."

Aquino, whose district covers the sand-rich Bacolor, last year filed a resolution urging an inquiry into the revenue potential from sand extraction. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Negros police force thirsts for gasoline

DUMAGUETE CITY—The Negros Oriental Peace and Order Council (POC) is asking the Philippine National Police (PNP) to increase the gasoline allocation of police stations in the province.

The request was contained in a resolution, which was passed by the POC during its meeting on Tuesday after several mayors complained of the sharp drop in gasoline allocation that slowed police mobility.

The POC, in the same resolution, also asked the PNP to clarify the volume of gasoline allotted to every police station in the province.

Mayor Valente Yap of Bindoy town, League of Municipalities in the province president, said the mayors were complaining because they were forced to shell out money to pay for additional gasoline for the police, which, he said, was an additional headache.

Mayor Apolinario Arnaiz Jr. of Pamplona said their police station used to receive an average of 300 liters of gasoline a month but lately, the allocation was reduced by half.

As a result, he added, the police could not immediately respond to alarms or reqaests for assistance due to lack of gasoline.

"So, we are forced to allocate some amount . . . Trouble is our municipality does not have enough funds," Arnaiz said.

Senior Insp. Petro Garcia, Canlaon City police chief, showed receipts and said he had to use his own money to buy gasoline.

He said it would not be right to turn down requests for police assistance just because they did not have enough gasoline for their patrol vehicles. *Romy Amarado, PDI Visayas Bureau*

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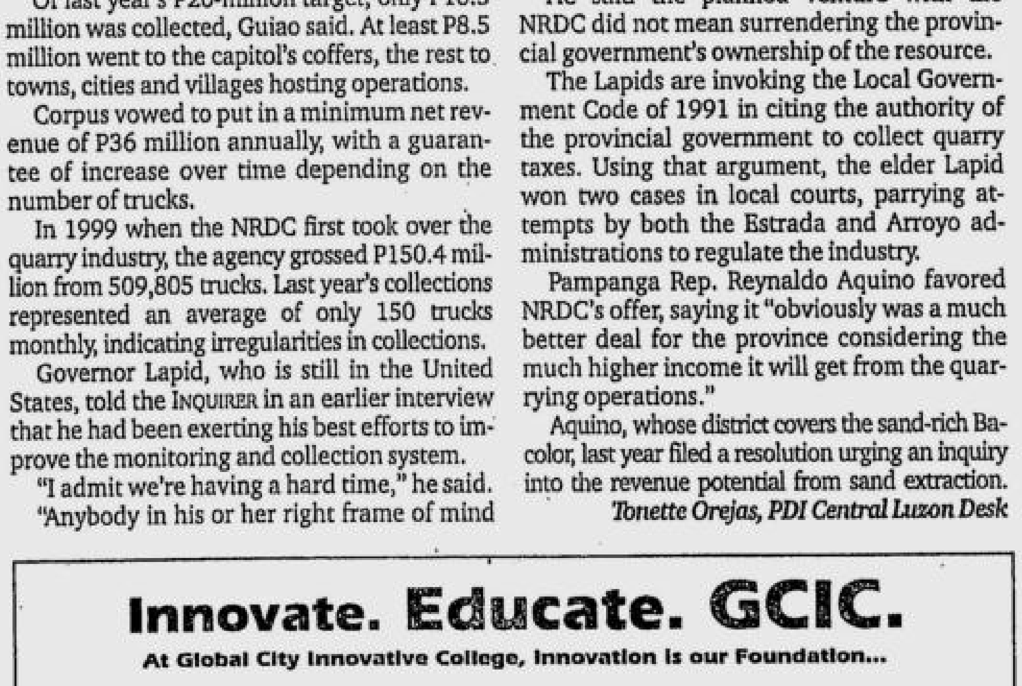

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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Floreño G. Solmirano

Philippine eagles find safe haven

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
Los Baños, Laguna

A SERPENT eagle, blind, sits motionless in one of the steel cages. A Philippine eagle has only one useful eye. A white-tailed sea eagle limps from a fractured thigh.

These are only some of the 93 "wards" in the Center for Philippine Raptors (CPR) at the two-hectare rainforest on Mount Makiling, a haven for battered birds or those that fled man's cruelty.

Most of the eagles in the center have broken wings, which make them unable to fly.

The CPR's goal is to protect and conserve the country's raptors, focusing on the Philippine eagle, once known as the monkey-eating eagle.

But as man neglects the environment and wildlife, the center became a "rescue and rehabilitation" sanctuary for sick, wounded, lost and waylaid raptors.

The 93 wards belong to 13 different raptor species in several steel cages scattered in the forest site.

The CPR's staff is composed of a project director, a resident veterinarian, a biologist, six caretakers and three staff members from the Protected Animal and Wildlife Bureau.

But the center was not designed as a custodial center for birds, said Althea Lota, CPR project director.

"In the first place, they are not supposed to be caged and their inherent freedom restricted. But our most immediate concern is to attend to the health of our wards. Once they are ready and have regained their inherent hunting skills, they will be released back to their natural habitat," she said.

Predators

Raptors or "meat-eating birds" include eagles, hawks, falcons, vultures, buzzards and owls.

As predators, raptors are important in conservation efforts.

A radical change in their situation can also alter the conditions of other prey species, including the decline in the population of other forms of life in the wild.

The government started its conservation efforts for the Philippine eagle (*Pithecophaga jefferyi*) in 1970 but it was focused on Mindanao.

In 1977, the Philippine Eagle Research and Nature Center was established in Baracatan, Davao City for research on and captive breeding of the Philippine eagle, considered one of the most powerful birds in the world.

But because of the worsening peace and order in the area, a new research facility was put up in Malagos District, Calinan, Davao City.

Three years later, the government established the Philippine Raptors Conservation Program (PRCP) when the Department of Environment and Natural Resources saw the importance of conservation activities for the Philippine eagle not only in Mindanao but also in Luzon and the Visayas.

Components

The PRCP has three major components: field research, which focuses on identifying the population distribution and number of Philippine eagles; community development and information, education and communication campaign; and captive population research and management.

To achieve its goals, the CPR was established in 1993 at the Makiling Botanical Garden in the University of the Philippines at Los Baños, some 65 km south of Manila.

The center also serves as a rehabilitation center for confiscated, abandoned and donated raptors and a venue for research and public education.

The daily food ration for the wards consists of six kilograms of fish a day, mostly "galunggong."

Sometimes, the birds are also fed lean meat. "But we also feed them with live prey such as rabbits and mice, which we raise here at the center. We release the live prey inside the cage for the raptors to catch… This is to maintain their hunting instinct," said Michael Sanchez, CPR resident biologist.

Philippine eagles are adept at snatching monkeys or other mammals or birds from trees. The eagle also attacks domestic animals.

The number of raptor species has greatly declined in recent years because of the extensive destruction of their habitat through the commercial logging of indigenous forests, grasslands and wetlands.

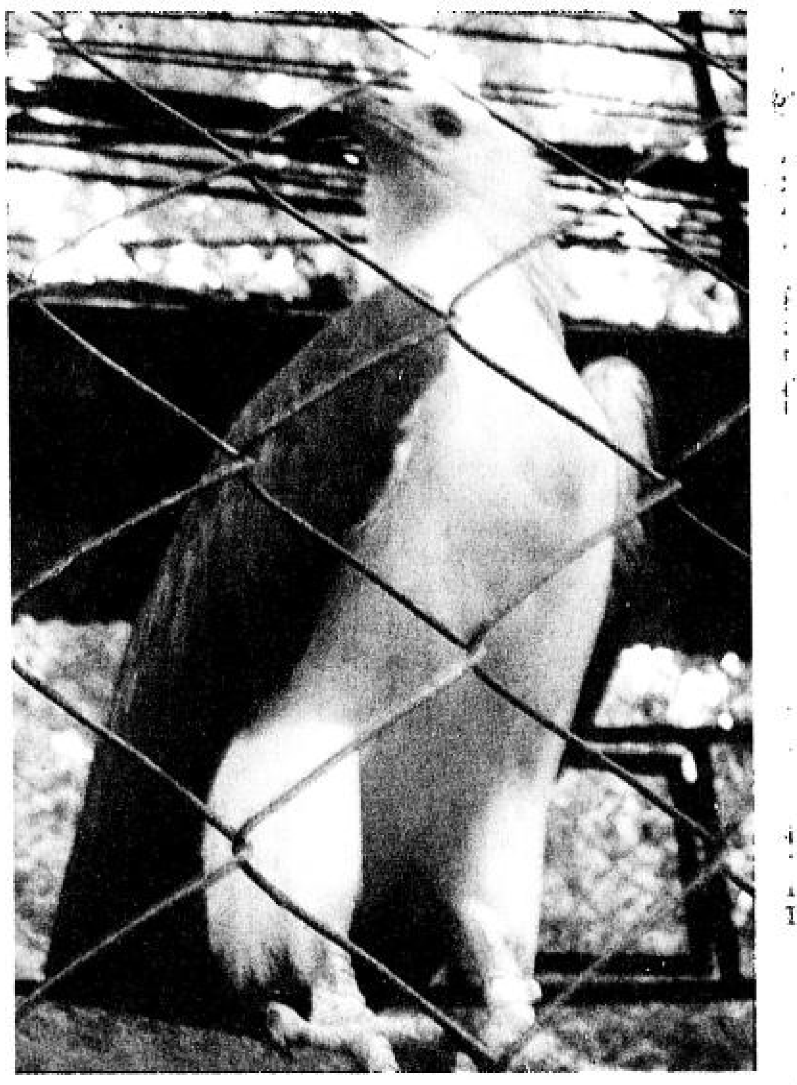
Changes in the situation of the raptors often serve as indicators of detrimental environmental changes.

Continuous research and studies on their conditions are necessary in the maintenance of natural resources, said Sanchez.

Superstition

The hunting and shooting of raptors for sport, the trading of birds as pets and ornaments, and the robbing of eggs and chicks from nests for senseless reasons have greatly contributed to the diminishing number of Philippine raptor species, Sanchez said.

Philippine folklore also contributed to the decline, he added.



A WHITE-BREASTED sea eagle undergoing rehabilitation from an injured thigh still maintains his regal bearing even inside the steel cage.

PHOTOS BY DELFIN T. MALLARI JR.

"In some parts of Laguna, some raptors are hunted and killed in the belief that they are 'aswang' (witches)," he said.

Sanchez said most of the raptor species, like the Philippine eagle owl, produce a variety of calls and vocalization.

Inside the center, the raptors in captivity can be heard producing continuous and orchestrated "aheeeh" and "whoo-hoo-hoo."

"When the barrio folk hear the high-pitched sounds, they attribute these to evil spirits, so they search for the source of the noise and shoot it," the biologist said.

Lack of funds

Lota lamented the lack of funds to implement programs for the conservation of the Philippine eagle and other raptors.

She said the center's annual budget of P5 million from the government could barely sustain the center's day-to-day operations.

For example, CPR has only one microscope, she said. She wished that rich individuals and business groups would rescue CPR and their wards through donations and sponsorships.

"Every centavo spent for the advancement of the project is a ray of hope for mankind and his environment," Sanchez said.

Some of the eagles are no longer fit to survive harsh forest conditions because of their injuries. Even if they recover, they would just stay at the center, Sanchez added.

To help propagate the CPR mission, regional eagle watch teams were organized to protect and monitor the Philippine eagle population in the wild and to help locate habitats and nesting sites of other raptors.

As of last March, at least 153 Philippine eagles have been recorded in 75 locations by the regional watch teams.

Training

And because of growing public awareness on the importance of protecting and preserving raptors, the center trains "eagle watch" volunteers in the proper handling of eagles.

Quezon Rep. Proceso Alcala, who maintains a bird park in Lucena City, has sent some of his staff members and community coordinators from Tanggol Kalikasan-Southern Tagalog to learn the correct handling of the raptors.

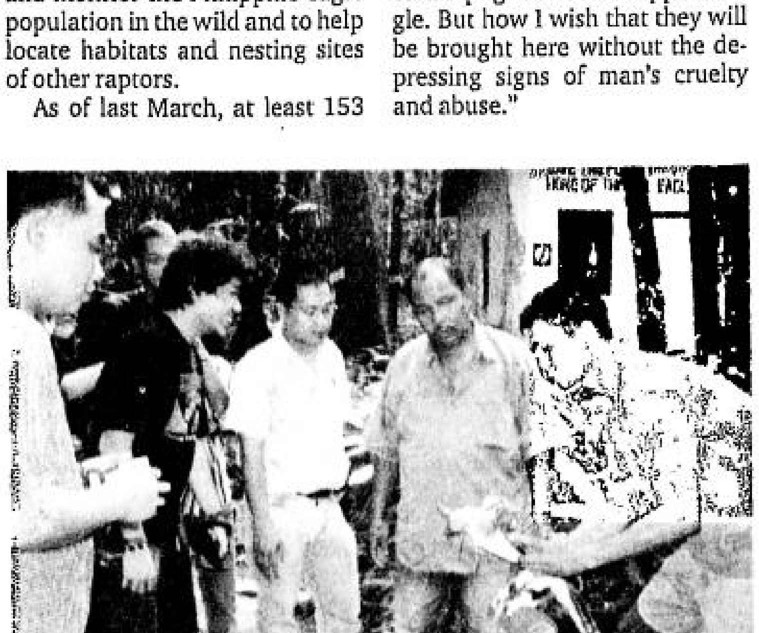
"With the regularity of voluntary surrenders of captured and wounded endangered wildlife species, it is important that there is a trained individual that would handle the bird before it is turned over to the concerned government agency," Alcala said.

Sanchez showed to the trainees how to fold the bird's wings into its body with two gloved hands and gently but firmly lift the bird into a transport container.

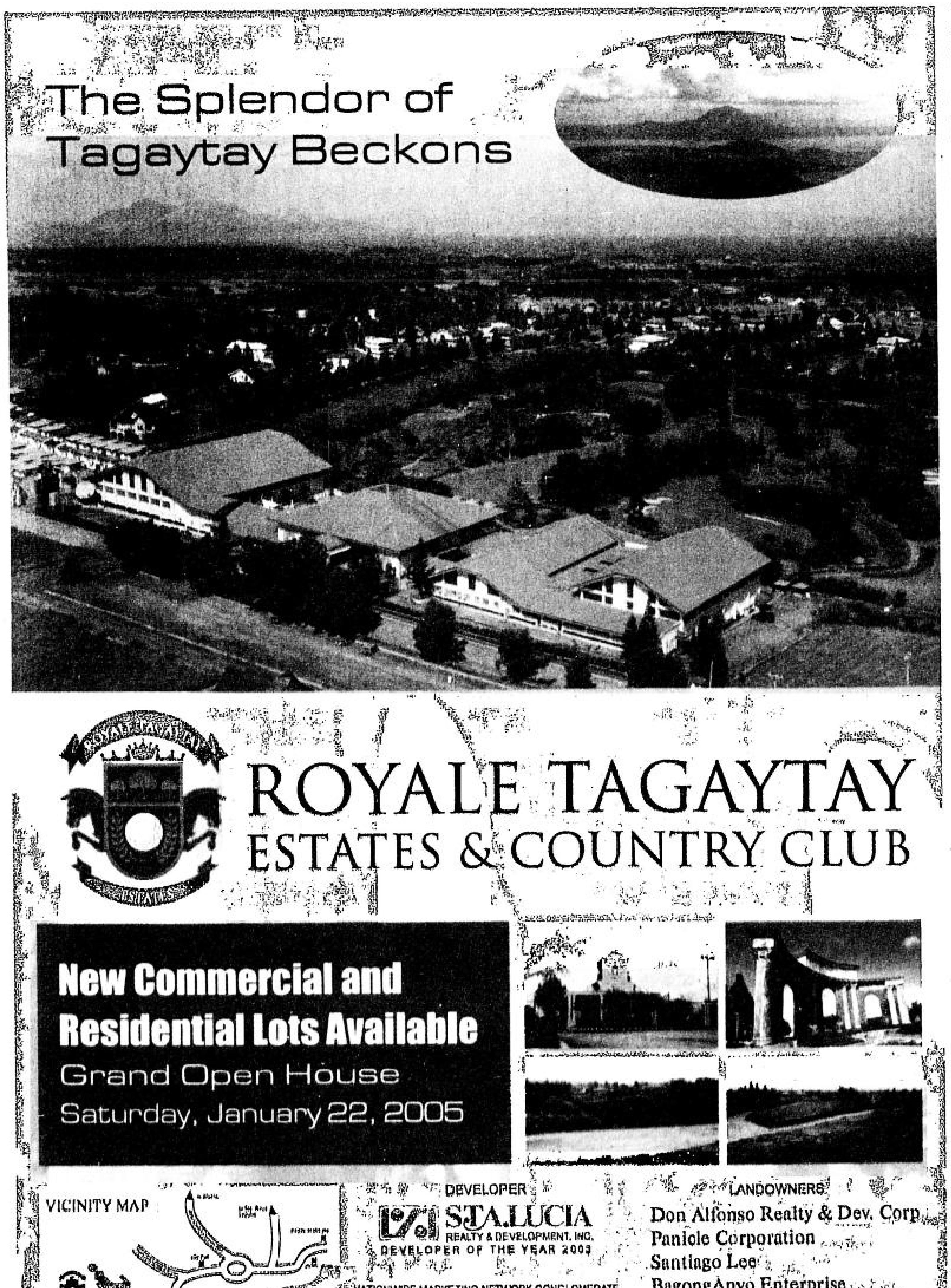
He warned that even a seriously injured raptor is unpredictable and could be dangerous.

Wild birds do not understand that they are being helped and will furiously defend themselves, the CPR staffer said.

Lota was ambivalent about the growing population of the center brought by the voluntary surrender of captured and wounded raptors. "Somehow, it indicates the public's positive awareness on the plight of the Philippine eagle. But how I wish that they will be brought here without the depressing signs of man's cruelty and abuse."



MICHAEL Sanchez, CPR resident biologist, shows how to hold the Philippine eagle.



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Baguio to hold flower fest despite DOH request

BAGUIO CITY—The masks are finally off.

Buoyed by reports that residents here no longer rely on surgical masks to move around the city, local officials finally gave the green light to the staging of the Baguio Flower Festival or Panagbenga, saying "our people are ready for it."

This goes against Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit's suggestion to postpone the annual tourist drawer until the DOH can certify that Baguio has been cleared of the fatal meningitis strain.

But the city government is holding the festival on Feb. 14 to March 2 "for the community and not the tourists," said Benedicto Alhambra, acting city administrator.

The city government had been concerned about the trauma residents may be suffering due to reports on meningococcemia, and the festival is part of the city's "healing process," Alhambra said.

The Philippine Military Academy is also proceeding with its annual alumni homecoming next month.

Maj. Edgard Arevalo, PMA spokesperson, said the PMA Makabayan Class of 1975 is hosting this year's homecoming from Feb. 17 to 19, in spite of the meningococcemia incidents.

Arevalo said the Armed Forces of the Philippines is studying proposals to vaccinate all PMA staff members and cadets, "but the military is inclined to believe medical opinion that all we need [to survive the disease] is exercise and a healthy lifestyle."

But tourists who will visit the city next month will still encounter masks.

Artists from at least three groups here have pooled their talents together under a new Panagbenga program helmed by filmmaker Kidlat Tahimik.

Mask maker Edgardo Espiritu is creating 100 humor masks to depict the meningococcemia scare. Theater artist Lynette Carantes is developing a series of interactive art projects for children.

"Artists have also been hurt by the scare. We were expected to tour a play in another part of the Cordillera, but we were stopped when they realized that we come from Baguio," said Raffy Kapuno, director of the play "Nikimalika."

Instead of the high profile business presence that characterized the more recent festivals, Kidlat has designed a more subdued combination of cultural activities.

Alhambra said the meningococcemia incidents gave the city little time to secure sponsorship, forcing it to try alternative program concepts.

Kidlat, however, is aiming for less extravagance. He had criticized Panagbenga's tolerance for the "cellphone wars."

Alhambra said Kidlat has reduced the scale of many of the flower festival activities by locating them to various Baguio parks "to encourage tourists to see all of Baguio, instead of just downtown Session Road."

"In fact, 10 Japanese dancers have informed us of their intention to join the event, in spite of [meningococcemia]," Alhambra said.

Kidlat also reinvented the week-long "Session Road in Bloom."

Session Road, the city's major road, will be closed for three days to allow businessmen to sell flowers and related products. *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

AN EARLIER scene of the Baguio City public market at the height of the meningococcemia scare.

TOOTS SOBERANO/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

Not oil spill, but barge itself destroyed Palawan corals

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—It was not an oil spill.

The clarification was made by Board Member Arthur Ventura, chair of the provincial council's committee on environment and natural resources, after he returned from his trip to Busuanga, Palawan on Tuesday to investigate a report of oil spill from a Malaysian-registered barge that damaged around seven hectares of coral reefs.

Ventura was the source of an INQUIRER story last Tuesday that quoted him as saying he had received a report from a non-government organization and local officials about an oil spill.

He said the report was inaccurate when he verified it personally in Barangay Cheey, Busuanga on Monday.

There were no traces of oil but some thin layers of gasoline.

The report alarmed the provincial government and the Philippine Coast Guard, which has some personnel stationed in the area.

Ventura rectified the report after validating the situation and the damage it caused to the coral reefs.

According to a Coast Guard report, the damage was confirmed through an underwater survey. It was caused by the grounding of the barge Malindo II that was broken in half due to big waves in the area. The barge is now sinking slowly and needs to be towed to avoid further coral reef destruction.

The damage was estimated to be worth P10 million.

On Dec. 4, Malindo II was being towed by tugboat Malindo I when it ran aground about .05 nautical miles west of Barangay Cheey.

It was carrying 990 pieces of mixed logs (not 600 pieces as earlier reported) on its way to China from Malaysia.

Ventura said the foreign company that owns the barge should pay for the damages.

David Ponce de Leon said the jurisdiction over the Malaysian company should be established first, so damages could be claimed. *Jofelle Tesorio, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Chocolate Hills seen site of golf course

CEBU CITY—Bohol Gov. Erico Aumentado has given his full support to the plan of Sagbayan Mayor Jimmy Torrefranca to build a golf course on the world-famous Chocolate Hills.

But the governor brushed aside apprehensions that the project might damage one of the hills' 1,268 mounds, the province's most famous attraction that straddles the towns of Carmen, Sagbayan and Batuan.

"I can guarantee that not even a single hill will be destroyed," Aumentado said.

To protect the Chocolate Hills, he said the mounds can be used as natural obstacles in the game.

Aumentado said he agreed with Torrefranca that the existence of a golf course in Sagbayan would benefit the people in the area.

He added that development in these areas was inevitable because the provincial government already tapped a Tokyo-based firm in order to come up with a master plan on Bohol's tourism development.

The plan will be completed in December.

The Pacific Consultant International was responsible in making Bali, Indonesia and Phuket, Thailand as well-known tourists destinations, according to the governor.

Aumentado said the golf course project in Sagbayan will be included in the master plan to cater to the demand of tourists who have cash to spend and are well-off.

"Many high-end tourists are looking for a golf course in Bohol but we don't have any golf course here," he said. *Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau*

HARVEST TIME

EV ESPIRITU/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

Ifugao farmers, mostly women, harvest *palay* in what is left of the rice terraces in Kiangan town. The terraces, once considered a wonder of the world, have been all but neglected.

Cult probed for disappearance of teeners

By Vincent Cabreza
and Donna Demetillo
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—A mother's plea to reclaim custody of her daughter from a television evangelist has made a Mindanao-based Church ministry the target of an investigation by the city council and government social workers.

Councilor Jose Molintas presented to the council on Monday a documented report about Erlinda Rillon, 60, mother of Arlene, the 19-year-old recruit of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, Name Above Every Name Inc., who became the subject of a 2004 legal battle.

Rillon claimed that Church founder and leader, Apollo Quiboloy, had been luring Baguio teenagers and young adults, who now refused to return home after being recruited to man Quiboloy's ministry in Barangay Catitipan in Davao City.

Danilo Gay, another Quiboloy recruit based in Baguio, told the INQUIRER on Tuesday that he recently recovered his 16-year-old daughter from Davao, after the missing Arlene recruited her to join the ministry.

Both Arlene and Gay's daughter were previously allowed to attend the International Youth Congress, where recruitment took place, Rillon said.

But neither girls were allowed by their parents to return to the congress in 2004 when they disappeared, she said.

Rillon has written Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Soliman about her legal situation, after learning that Quiboloy now asserts the separation of Church and state in rebuffing government mediators.

Several evangelical groups in Baguio have started a letter campaign to ask Quiboloy to release Arlene, on Rillon's request.

Trap

Joy Adaclog, the social worker assigned to Arlene's case, said the Department of Social Welfare and Development also asked Quiboloy to allow government psychologists to counsel Arlene "in the spirit of Christianity."

But she has yet to receive a response from Davao.

Rillon said she asked the city council to intervene and rescue Baguio teenagers from "falling into the trap of a cult that is out to destroy the unity of families."

A former Church member, Rillon said the Church is a scam because it requires members to pay tithes as high as P70,000 a month.

To support their Church, the members are reportedly forced to sell Church products door-to-door during the annual "Month of Sacrifice," which lasts from November to January, Rillon said.

"I was the only one bold enough to go to court [in August 2004] to ask a regional trial court judge to compel the Church to release Arlene back to my custody," she said.

Son of god

Copies of Quiboloy's memorandums that remind members about their tithing dues bear the title "Office of the Son of God."

But Rillon lost her case when Arlene issued an affidavit saying she willingly joined Quiboloy's ministry. Arlene had just turned 18 when her mother went to court.

"We are not forcing Arlene to stay in Davao. She refuses to go home. She really has a calling . . . She is happy in our music department and even sings during our TV program," said Flor Malasaga, the Church's regional coordinator.

Charlie Nerona, head of the Church's preachers' club in Baguio who was implicated in Arlene's case last year, said he accompanied Arlene to her parents in August, upon the suggestion of Judge Clarence Villanueva, who handled Rillon's petition for *habeas corpus*.

"But instead of welcoming us, [Arlene's father, Aurelio] chased us with a bolo, when they used to describe him in court as an invalid due to a heart attack. Their neighbors also chased us away. Arlene decided to return to Davao after that incident," Nerona said.

He said the Church bore Rillon "no ill will" because she "misunderstood" the goals of the Church.

He said Quiboloy's main reason for recruiting members was to help finance a worldwide evangelical network that would preach the Bible.

Selling `puto'

Nerona said young adults, who are asked to sell Church products, like rice cakes, are given a mission to finance the Church's 17 radio stations and satellite equipment, which will broadcast their regular TV programs globally beginning Jan. 28.

He said 38 cities in the country are now hosting these radio stations to broaden the Church's mass appeal.

Nerona said Quiboloy does not "force anyone to join the Church," and regularly counsels devotees to consult their families first before joining the ministry.

Rillon said the Church broke that rule when they "separated Arlene from her family." She said the group's recruitment manual asks recruits to present waivers from their families even if a recruit is 30 years old.

ROUNDUP

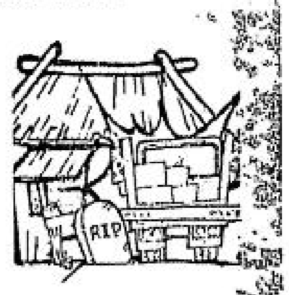
Russian roulette gets fatal

BACOLOD CITY—An 18-year-old student was killed after he accidentally shot himself in the head while playing "Russian Roulette" with an unlicensed gun inside his house in Purok Calubihan in Barangay Caridad, Bago City, Negros Occidental. Supt. Mark Edison Belarma, acting provincial police chief, said Ernst August Ryan Ramos removed the five bullets from a .38 cal. revolver, and then pointed the gun at his head. Belarma said Ramos must have failed to notice that a live bullet was still left in the gun chamber. *Carla Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*

City honors San Pablo

SAN PABLO CITY—With a week-long festivity focused on the coconut and dubbed Coconut Festival, the city government and the parish of San Pablo City celebrated the city's 325th feast in honor of its patron, St. Paul, the First Hermit. The celebration culminated on Saturday. The Spanish Friars founded the parish in 1680 and chose St. Paul as its patron. St. Paul lived in 250 A.D. when Roman Emperor Decio was persecuting early Christians in Rome. He escaped to the mountains of Southern Tabaida in Egypt to live alone in solitary prayer and sacrifices. St. Paul reportedly lived more than 80 years underneath a tree, which is near a spring, and subsisted by eating fruits from the tree and bread brought by a black bird. He died in 342 A.D. at the age of 113. *Romulo Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Relief truck kills man



PAKIL, Laguna—A Lucena City-bound military truck in a convoy of military vehicles which had just been used for relief operations in calamity-stricken Infanta, Quezon, collided with another vehicle, hit two houses and killed a resident recently. SPO4 Henry San Pedro of Pakil police said the military truck hit the rear bumper of an Isuzu jeep and rammed two houses. A person living in one of the houses, Eugenio G. Gistiada, 84, died on the spot. *Romulo Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

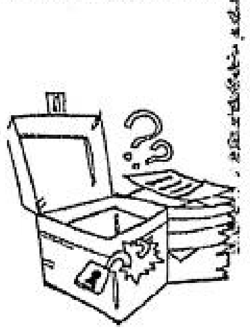
3 persons missing

STA. CRUZ, Laguna—Police said three persons were missing in separate circumstances in Alabang, Muntinlupa City; Cabuyao, Laguna and Sta. Rosa City last week. Laguna provincial police director Senior Supt. Jaime Calungsod identified the first missing person as Joven Buscano, 18, of Barangay Duhat, Sta. Cruz, Laguna and studying and residing in Sto Niño Village, Alabang, Muntinlupa City. The second missing person is Leonilo Gecana, 34, a barangay councilor, of St. Francis Xavier Subdivision, Balibago, Sta. Rosa City. Also missing is his white Mitsubishi L-300 van with plate XME-361. The third missing person is Gil F. Garcia, 17, of Barangay San Isidro, Cabuyao, Laguna. *Romulo Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Missing woman

LOS BAÑOS, Laguna—A woman, who was last seen being escorted by a policeman, was reported missing since Jan. 1. A police report identified the missing woman as Karen Bandong, 27, of Jamboree Site in this town, and the police escort as Insp. Fernando Guico. Police described the missing woman as around 5'2" in height, slim, fair complexioned, round faced, with long, blonde, straight hair, wearing spaghetti blouse and *maong* pants and high-heeled sandals. *PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Poll protest



CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The Commission on Elections has started the revision of ballots in response to the electoral protest filed by two losing mayoral candidates against Mayor Oscar Rodriguez last year. At least 140 of the 510 ballot boxes used in the May 10, 2004 elections have been opened on Friday. Former Immigration Commissioner Andrea Domingo (Kampi) and former Vice Mayor Eligio Lagman (Partido ng Masang Pilipino) filed separate electoral protests against Rodriguez (Lakas-CMD) after the latter assumed his post as city mayor. Domingo and Lagman claimed that "massive fraud" in favor of Rodriguez was committed during the canvassing of votes and that "the result of the election did not reflect the popular will of the people" of this city. Rodriguez denied the allegations. *Jun Malig, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

RP No. 2 on corruption list in ADB survey

From page A1

by business firms.

The ADB said that the Philippines' "anemic growth" over the past two decades can be explained by its "poor investment climate that limited capital formation, productivity and competitiveness of firms."

Unless these key concerns are met, "the country's rebound may prove to be very difficult, if not impossible to achieve," the ADB said.

Political instability, increasing electricity costs and oil prices, infrastructure bottlenecks and bureaucratic red tape all add to the cost of doing business in the Philippines, the survey said.

Of the companies surveyed, 62 percent rated infrastructure as being inefficient with only 20 percent of the country's roads paved.

Corruption was listed as the second most important concern.

"Corruption is already perceived to be systemic and widespread across all levels of the bureaucracy," the report said.

Tom Crouch, the ADB country director for the Philippines, told a press briefing that the will to carry out reforms was not the issue, noting that the government was addressing many of the issues raised in the report.

But he said the Philippines still has a long way to go if it is to catch up with its neighbors.

"I don't doubt its (government's) commitment and concern for the economic reform of this country. The question is the pace of reform and that is crucial," said Crouch.

To address investors' concerns over macro-economic instability, the government should reduce its budget deficit and refrain from absorbing the debts and losses of government-owned and -controlled corporations, the study said.

The report said a system of lifestyle checks alone was not enough to combat corruption.

The "critical missing factor to effectively come to grips with it [corruption] is firm political will and commitment to implement the required policies and civil service reform," it said.

The ADB said graft was also a serious problem in tax administration, with only 77 percent of revenues being reported by enterprises for tax-payment purposes.

Bribes

The study showed that enterprises resort to informal payments in obtaining regulatory permits and licenses, such as in getting a telephone or electricity connection or securing a construction permit, import license or operating license.

"Payment of bribes exacts a heavy cost on the economy since it prevents the small, new entrants but efficient firms from acquiring public contracts. In addition, it imposes an additional direct cost to business which is often passed on to consumers," the ADB report said.

The survey of the domestic investment climate turned up other worrisome findings on corruption:

- Bribery accounts for an average of 2 percent of the value of public contracts or firm sales.
- Bribery slows down sales growth by 7 percent.
- In the Calabarzon industrial growth area, electronics firms spend 4 percent of sales for informal payments or bribes.
- Small firms incur bigger losses from making irregular payments as a proportion of sales at 2.2 percent and 2.6 percent of contract value, than do medium and large firms.
- In the National Capital Region, small firms pay 2.5 percent of sales, bigger than those paid by small firms in Calabarzon and Cebu-Davao at 1.6 percent and 1.8 percent of sales respectively, of which electronics and garment firms pay the most.

In terms of the business costs of corruption, the Philippines placed 82nd, ranking better only than Bangladesh among selected Asian developing countries.

Tax administration is another area in which the Philippines performed poorly, ranking 97 out of 102 countries.

"By evading payment of more taxes, firms within the same industry undermine competition. On the other hand, the slow and overburdened courts work in favor of non-compliance because even if the government pursues cases against them, settlements are normally made at a compromise that could in fact result in savings," the report said.

The food and food processing industry in the Philippines appears to be particularly burdened by the tax system, with 48 percent of the food and food processing firms complaining about tax rates being those from Cebu and Davao.

Penalty system not credible

"Income taxation in the Philippines is mostly net-based taxation, has more tax brackets and exemptions than necessary, and such system presents more loopholes for evasion and corruption. Certain influential classes of taxpayers benefit from circumventing the tax system, resulting in distortions in investment incentives," the study noted.

"The penalty system for non-compliant taxpayers and tax collectors lured by bribery seemed not very credible and restrictive," it added.

Gift-giving or bribery was noted to be equally serious among local government units whose responsibilities include issuance of construction and operating licenses.

The firms surveyed said that 95 percent of the time, inspections and meetings relating to regulations were with local officials. In some of these meetings, informal payments were explicitly requested by government bureaucrats, such as tax inspectors.

Obstacle to business

Transactions at the customs bureau are also commonly perceived to be riddled with corruption. Close to 50 percent of the firms surveyed regard customs administration as a moderate-to-major obstacle to business.

The Philippines ranked the same as India in this category, and worse than in all the other countries surveyed, except Bangladesh.

"Delay in getting goods cleared through customs is a major bottleneck for firms relying on imported inputs. Typically, bribery is used to speed up the process of getting government authorization or permits, thus encouraging public officials to slow down the process," the study said.

Simplify, streamline

The ADB urged the government to simplify and streamline the regulatory system to significantly reduce the burden on the conduct of business in the country.

"Models of more efficient regulatory systems from the more advanced countries should not be too difficult to adopt. Simpler and more transparent regulations also reduce corruption," it said.

It urged the government to implement strictly the penalty system for non-compliant taxpayers and tax collectors accepting bribes.

Technical advice

The ADB suggested that anti-corruption efforts might focus on local government units and has offered to provide technical advice for a pilot LGU project for planning and implementing a program to curb corruption. *With reports from AFP and AP*

Collect more, reap reward, or you are fired

From page A1

This brought to two the tax reform measures that Congress has approved so far, out of eight that Malacañang asked it to pass.

A bill to increase the excise tax for tobacco and alcohol products was earlier enacted.

At 6:30 p.m. last night, the Senate ratified the bicameral conference report with no senator objecting to it.

Not half an hour later, the House ratified the report.

The bill will now go to Malacañang for signing into law by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Senate President Franklin Drilon and Sen. Ralph Recto later claimed that the Senate had its way because the ratified measure was the version it earlier approved.

"The Senate version was adopted except for some small amendments that would not change the concept that the Senate had approved," Drilon said.

Only for BOC, BIR

The Senate version proposed that the reward and penalty system should apply only to the Bureau of Customs and the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

Recto, chair of the Senate ways and means committee, explained that no other government agencies and government-owned companies and corporations were covered by the lateral attrition system because these agencies were mostly regulatory in nature and and not generating revenues or collecting taxes.

With the lateral attrition and sin tax measures already approved, Drilon said Congress would next focus on passing immediately the bill to increase the value-added tax.

Drilon said the Senate would give priority to the VAT bill because it has a "measurable revenue impact."

He noted that the proposed 2-percent hike in the VAT rate was expected to generate P40 billion in revenues.

Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr. (LP, Camarines Sur) said the rewards and sanctions system provided for in the lateral attrition bill would encourage the collection of more revenues.

If collections exceed 30 percent or below the annual target, the so-called Rewards and Incentives Fund for BIR and BOC officials and personnel will be 15 percent of the excess collections.

If collections exceed targets by more than 30 percent, the incentive will be 15 percent of the first 30 percent excess, plus 20 percent of the remaining excess collection.

Downgrade undeserved

Officials and employees whose revenue collections fall short of the target by at least seven-and-a-half percent, "with due consideration of all relevant factors," will be dismissed from the service.

Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. said the approval of the bill showed that the country did not merit the credit downgrade recently imposed by the Standard and Poor's ratings agency.

Maverick administration Rep. Robert Ace Barbers (Lakas, Surigao del Norte) dismissed the bill as unnecessary and contrary to the spirit of civil service.

"Revenue officials are no different from other government employees who have sworn to fulfill duties without promise or thought of extra compensation," Barbers said.

Smuggling

BIR Commissioner Guillermo Parayno said smuggling was not only hurting customs collections but also the BIR as tax remittances from industries have been markedly reduced by the unabated entry of smuggled goods.

Parayno told businessmen during a revenue meeting that BIR regional directors have reported a drop in the tax payments of companies facing stiff competition from smuggled goods like plastic, shoes and tiles.

With the influx of cheap items mostly from China, majority of industries barely eked out a profit last year and this has led to lower tax collections for the BIR.

Parayno said that this was a "logical conclusion" although the BIR has yet to come up with data to show how much smuggling has eroded tax payments.

The BIR reported yesterday that its tax collection last year was 1.3 percent, or P6.3 billion short of its of P476.3 billion target.

Higher than previous year

Still, the bureau's 2004 revenues of P470 billion were higher by 10.2 percent from the previous year's, its best performance in six years.

Federation of Philippine Industries president Jesus Arranza said that smuggling has undermined the viability of industries already struggling with high power and labor costs at home.

Unless the government is able to restore fair competition by stopping smuggling, Arranza said it was unlikely to squeeze out more revenues from the new taxes.

"We believe that curbing smuggling would help solve the fiscal crisis," said Francis Chua, executive vice president of the Federation of Filipino Chinese Chamber of Commerce.

No special activity to mark GMA ascension to power

THERE was no special activity in Malacañang to commemorate President Macapagal-Arroyo's installation to the presidency four years ago yesterday.

Only a Mass was held on Sunday to mark the first day of the Edsa II uprising in January 2001, which was sparked by the majority vote of senators sitting as an impeachment court not to open a second envelope containing evidence of corruption against then President Joseph Estrada.

Ms Arroyo yesterday hosted lunch for media executives at the Palace, but no official came out to brief reporters on her activities and pronouncements for the day.

Neither Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye nor Presidential Communications Director Silvestre Afable III was available for the regular press briefing. *Juliet Labog-Javellana*

Like show business, AFP, PNP star-studded, says solon

From page A1

they are generals and are heavily armed.

The number of military generals was so staggering that the AFP can form one company made only of generals, the number of AFP colonels can fill up two battalions, said Camarines Sur Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr.

And the PNP's own stars can form an undersized battalion, said Andaya, who chairs the House committee on appropriations that reviews the military and police budgets.

A battalion is made up of about 500 soldiers while a company numbers about 100 members.

Based on the documents furnished his committee, Andaya said the number of military generals has risen to 163. Of this number, one was a general (four stars), 11 lieutenant generals (three stars), 41 major generals (two stars) and 110 brigadier generals (one star).

This was twice the number of generals when the country was under martial law, the congressman said.

At the Philippine National Police, the number of officers with stars on their shoulders stood at 71, according to the latest count.

The PNP is headed by a director general whose four-star rank is equivalent to that of the AFP chief of staff.

The PNP has three deputy director generals, 11 police directors and 56 chief superintendents.

In total, there are 234 generals in Camp Aguinaldo, the military headquarters, and the adjacent Camp Crame, the national police headquarters.

By Andaya's account, his committee has placed the number of AFP colonels at 780, enough to make up two battalions.

The PNP has 501 senior superintendents, the equivalent of Army or Air Force colonels, and 1,515 Navy captains, enough to form four battalions, said Andaya.

Outside the AFP-PNP axis are "tens of generals," those serving in the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, the Bureau of Fire Protection and the Coast Guard.

Andaya stressed that he was not against the rise in the number of generals as he noted that the increase was still commensurate with the rise in the troop strength of the major armed services.

"The allocation is also pursuant to law. The increase was also meant to minimize jockeying for positions among officers and untangle a logjam of officers who cannot be promoted to the next rank because of the limited slots in the upper echelon," he said.

The AFP headquarters has 9,994 officers and men; the Philippine Air Force, 17,581; the Philippine Army, 79,661; the Philippine Navy, 23,814; the Philippine Military Academy, 1,760, and the AFP Medical Center, 750.

The PNP has 119,893 uniformed personnel.

Under the law, military officers must not exceed 15 percent the number of enlisted personnel.

Generals, on the other hand, must not exceed 1.125 percent of the officers' corps.

The allocation for generals was further divided as follows: general/admiral, 1 percent; lieutenant general/vice admiral, 7 percent; major general/rear admiral, 30 percent, and brigadier general/commodore, 32 percent.

Ex-PEA exec faces graft rap over 'Road to Perdition' scam

From page A1

ter her father, the wheels of justice are finally starting to grind.

Yesterday, the Supreme Court paved the way for the prosecution of a top PEA executive involved in the alleged overprice of the President Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard in the Manila Bay reclamation area by almost P600 million.

20 co-accused

In a six-page resolution on Jan. 12, the tribunal's Second Division upheld the Sandiganbayan's decision to deny former PEA general manager Carlos P. Doble's motion to quash the information filed against him before the antigraft court.

The high court threw out Doble's petition to have the Sandiganbayan ruling overturned.

Doble and his co-accused which include 20 officials of the PEA, six from the Commission on Audit, and Jesusito Legaspi, the president of JD Legaspi Construction, which bagged the contract for the asphalt road, were charged with graft for allegedly overpricing the boulevard.

They allegedly misrepresented the contract cost to be P584 million when it was only P298 million "in order to bring up the adjustments or overruns to the allowable exemptions under the law."

Doble had asked the high court to overturn the Sandiganbayan ruling, claiming that the provision of PD 1594, the law which deals with government infrastructure projects, was a "constitutive element" of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, under which he was prosecuted.

"A declaration of the unconstitutionality of PD 1594 would affect the very core of the information which should cause the dismissal thereof," Doble said.

Antigraft law violations

The high court disagreed. It said it did not decide questions on the constitutionality of laws unless the question was raised properly and was "presented in an appropriate case and was necessary to its determination."

The tribunal noted that Doble and his co-accused were not charged under PD 1594 or its implementing rules and regulations but with violating Section 3 of the antigraft law.

"As correctly pointed out by the prosecution, the guilt of the accused hinges on whether he acted with evident bad faith and manifest partiality in causing undue injury to the government and/or in giving unwarranted benefits to the private contractor," the court said.

'Immaterial'

The tribunal said the constitutionality of PD 1594 and its implementing rules and regulations was "immaterial and need not necessarily be resolved in order to determine the guilt or innocence of the accused."

Aside from Doble, other top PEA officials charged with graft were former PEA chair Francisco San Juan, deputy general manager Manuel Berina Jr., assistant general manager Jaime Millan, deputy manager Bernardo Viray and project management officer Raphael Pocholo Zorillo.

The respondents from the PEA include members of its board of directors during the Estrada and Macapagal administrations.

The Ombudsman earlier filed graft charges against the PEA officials and 22 others before the Sandiganbayan for the overpriced road project that cost the government P532.92 million "at the very least."

The alleged overprice involved two portions of the boulevard (measuring about 2.3 kilometers at Pacific Avenue and at the opposite end at Buendia Avenue) that were assigned to JD Legaspi Construction, one of the three firms that built the road.

3 contractors

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio noted that PEA had paid JD Legaspi P837.3 million for a 2.3-km, eight-lane asphalt road.

"The other two contractors, however, spent less than the combined amount of P300 million for the portions awarded to them. The two built the remaining portions of the controversial asphalt road, including two bridges ... which are more than half the project. The work done by these two contractors, just like the non-adjacent portions done by JD Legaspi Construction, involved the same stretch of road," he said.

The two other contractors were Shoemart Inc. and Wenceslao/R-I Consortium.

The PEA was created in 1977 by then President Ferdinand Marcos through Presidential Decree No. 1084 to serve primarily as the clearing house for all reclamation projects in the country.

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E-mail: pr_metro@inquirer.com.ph
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Metro road accidents double in 2004

By Margaux C. Ortiz

NOT A few eyebrows were raised when the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) intensified sidewalk clearing operations and implemented the wet flag policy to confine pedestrians to the sidewalks. But MMDA officials say they have good reason for these controversial projects.

A study by the MMDA Road Safety Unit showed that the rate of road accidents in Metro Manila doubled in 2004 from the previous year.

The MMDA-RSU reported that the number of incidents rose to 5,237 from 2,264 in 2003, and 1,262 in 2002.

MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando attributed the steep rise in road accidents to the lack of proper road signages in the metropolis.

"We are doing everything we can to put up all the necessary signages and footbridges for the motorists and pedestrians' safety," Fernando said in an interview.

But the MMDA chief said the agency needed around P1 billion to install all the needed signages.

"And even if we have the budget to do so, we still lack the technical expertise for this particular project," Fernando said.

MMDA Traffic Operations Center Executive Director Angelito Vergel de Dios added that the faster flow of traffic on Metro Manila's roads had resulted in more accidents.

"While MMDA projects such as the U-turn slot or clearway scheme have greatly improved traffic flow, pedestrians who refuse to abide by road rules have been adversely affected," he said.

The traffic chief noted that pedestrians often meet accidents when they choose not to use footbridges.

The MMDA-RSU study showed that pedestrians topped the list of recorded fatalities last year.

The study noted that 142 of the 281 persons killed in the accidents were pedestrians while 80 were drivers and 59 were passengers.

The report said the relatively high number of pedestrians killed was a cause of concern.

After finding similar results in last year's study, the MMDA-RSU said "the large number of pedestrians killed in road accidents has very serious implications on the amount of attention being given to pedestrians."

But MMDA-RSU head Max Tapongot clarified that the difference between the 2003 and 2004 records "may not have been that large."

"We collected only 20 percent of traffic reports in 2003 because of the absence of an organized system and the lack of cooperation from a number of traffic investigators," Tapongot said.

He noted in his report that it could have been inevitable that much data was missed in 2003.

However, he added, "The rate of accidents last year really increased as a whole."

The MMDA-RSU was set up in February 2002 to identify and "treat" accident sites through the Metro Manila Accident Reporting and Analysis System.

Third Nida witness is credible, says DOJ

BACK in the limelight, Nida Blanca murder suspect Philip Medel is escorted by agents of the National Bureau of Investigation as he is transferred from the bureau's detention center to the Pasig City Jail.
ERIK ARAZAS

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE THIRD witness in the murder case of actress Nida Blanca is credible despite the reservations of lawyer Harriet Demetriou, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said yesterday.

Gonzalez added that Demetriou should also present credible witnesses against retired military chief Galileo Kintanar if she wanted him investigated.

Gonzalez said that he found Francisco to be "very, very credible" and that the decision on whether he should be presented in court rested with him.

"I find his testimony to be very, very credible. I will not allow people to cast doubts on him because of biases or to protect others," the justice secretary said.

Gonzales earlier said that Demetriou, lawyer of Blanca's daughter Kaye Torres, expressed reservation about Francisco because he was reportedly going to name a close associate of the actress as a suspect in her killing.

Close to Nida

Gonzalez on Monday said Demetriou was concerned that Francisco would testify that "some people close to the victim might have been involved" in Blanca's killing.

Francisco earlier identified a woman, 60 to 65-years-old, as among the three persons who fetched Blanca from the Atlanta Center Building hours before her murder.

Gonzalez said he had ordered prosecutors to notify a new set of suspects, including the woman, of the preliminary investigation that the DOJ would conduct in 10 days.

He said that if Demetriou wanted Kintanar, former chief of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, investigated, she should present witnesses or evidence linking him to the Nov. 7, 2001, murder.

Kintanar's name had come up repeatedly in the Blanca case, especially after a witness complained the general's men were harassing him.

His name popped up again after two witnesses allegedly learned of a plan on how to keep Kintanar's name out of the Blanca murder case.

But Gonzalez said these were not enough to include Kintanar in the preliminary investigation.

Medel transfer

Yesterday, detained suspect Philip Medel was transferred from the NBI to the Pasig City Jail amid protests by his lawyer Salvador Panelo.

Panelo asked the Regional Trial Court in Pasig City not to effect the transfer of his client because Medel's life would be at stake.

"As soon as the order of the Honorable Court came out, the accused (Medel) received confidential information that a bounty of P50,000 has been placed on his head inside the Pasig Provincial Jail," Panelo said in his motion.

RTC Branch 156 received the motion at about 3 p.m. yesterday.

Panelo argued that the safest place for Medel was still the NBI cell, where Medel had been staying for the past two years. *With a report from Luige del Puerto*

Jaworski, Secretary Yap clash over Pasig lot

By Cynthia D. Balana

A LEGISLATOR accused the agriculture secretary and the latter's father of instigating an illegal demolition of some 80 market stalls on disputed land in Pasig City.

In a press conference, Pasig City Rep. Robert "Dodot" Jaworski condemned Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap and his father, Domingo, for the Dec. 20 demolition at the Bolante Market in Barangay Palatiw.

Yap and Domingo were reportedly the vice president and president, respectively, of DHY Realty and Development Corp. Inc., which reportedly bought a 3,000-sq.-m. property in the Bolante Market area in 1999.

According to Jaworski, vendors and stall owners who have been using the land for the last 30 years disputed the sale before the Pasig City Metropolitan Court, which then issued a writ of preliminary injunction.

On Dec. 20 last year, the demolition pushed through by virtue of a court order.

However, Jaworski stressed, the order covered four stalls only.

Jaworski said he rushed to the site after vendors and residents from the Carlota Mendoza Compound Vendors Association sought his help.

The legislator said that when he confirmed from the judge who issued the demolition order that it was for four stalls only, he sought a dialogue with the police team implementing the order.

He said he tried to talked to one Col. Arnold Apostol who was there and even called up Philippine National Police Director General Edgardo Aglipay but it was too late. All the structures on the land had been destroyed.

Jaworski expressed outraged at the alleged lack of adherence to the rule of law by the police and its overzealousness in effecting the order.

He said he looked into the alleged sale of the land and found out signs of controversy.

For starters, he said, the property had a market value of P90 million but DHY reportedly only bought it for P1 million. Worse, the property has reportedly been exempted from tax coverage.

Jaworski said Yap could have stopped the demolition but did nothing.

But Yap denied allegations linking him to the demolition.

In a statement, Yap said he deplored the attempt of Jaworski to link him to an impropriety.

"Authorities should investigate circumstances behind the alleged complaint by the Carlota Mendoza Compound Vendors Association that they had been illegally evicted," said Yap.

Admitting that the DHY Realty was owned by his family, Yap said he had divested from all his family's business interests upon joining government.

"I must take strong exception to his accusation that my family is involved in any sort of impropriety. I am particularly saddened that he has implied in his press release that I would use my position to help our family companies. It is precisely to avoid any sort of conflict of interest that I voluntarily and completely divested myself of my previous business holdings," Yap said.

METROBRIEFS

3 bomb threats

BOMB threats disrupted business yesterday at three government offices. Reports of explosives planted in their buildings hit the Land Transportation Office in Quezon City, the Rizal Provincial Capitol in Pasig City, and the Home Mortgage Finance Corp. in Makati City. Explosives experts swept through the buildings but no bombs were found. PO2 Ronald O. Robles of the Makati police said the HMFC threat was the fourth bomb scare their team received and responded to in the city this month. *Bella V. Bondoc and Irene C. Perez*

FPJ's 40th day rites

MASSES will be held in various parts of the country on Saturday in commemoration of the 40th day rites of king of Philippine movies Fernando Poe Jr. Lito Anzures, spokesperson of Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, met with actor Rez Cortez, chief of National Council of Concerned of Volunteers, yesterday to discuss the ceremonies. Anzures said they would secure a permit to hold a Mass at the Edsa Shrine on Saturday morning where they expect a number of FPJ supporters to attend. He said it would not be a mass action against the government. Supporters are discouraged from bringing placards to respect the solemnity of the occasion. Members of the United Opposition including Mayor Binay will attend the Mass. *Irene C. Perez*

Cruz family rapped

FOR QUESTIONING a court order, members of the family of Dr. Amanda Cruz may be seeing more of the court. Members of the Cruz family, who stirred a commotion on Tuesday as they refused to vacate a gasoline station they had been running for more than 20 years, were charged with resisting authority. Named respondents were Francisco Cruz and his three children for putting up a daylong fight against a court sheriff and officers of the Western Police District who were enforcing a court order for their eviction. *Tarra V. Quismundo*

Valenzuela amnesty

THE VALENZUELA CITY council has extended up to Jan. 31 the tax amnesty for delinquent business tax payers, and up to Feb. 28 the deadline for real property tax payers. No fines or surcharges will be imposed for those settling their dues before the given dates. The amnesty was supposed to end today. *Edson C. Tandoc Jr.*

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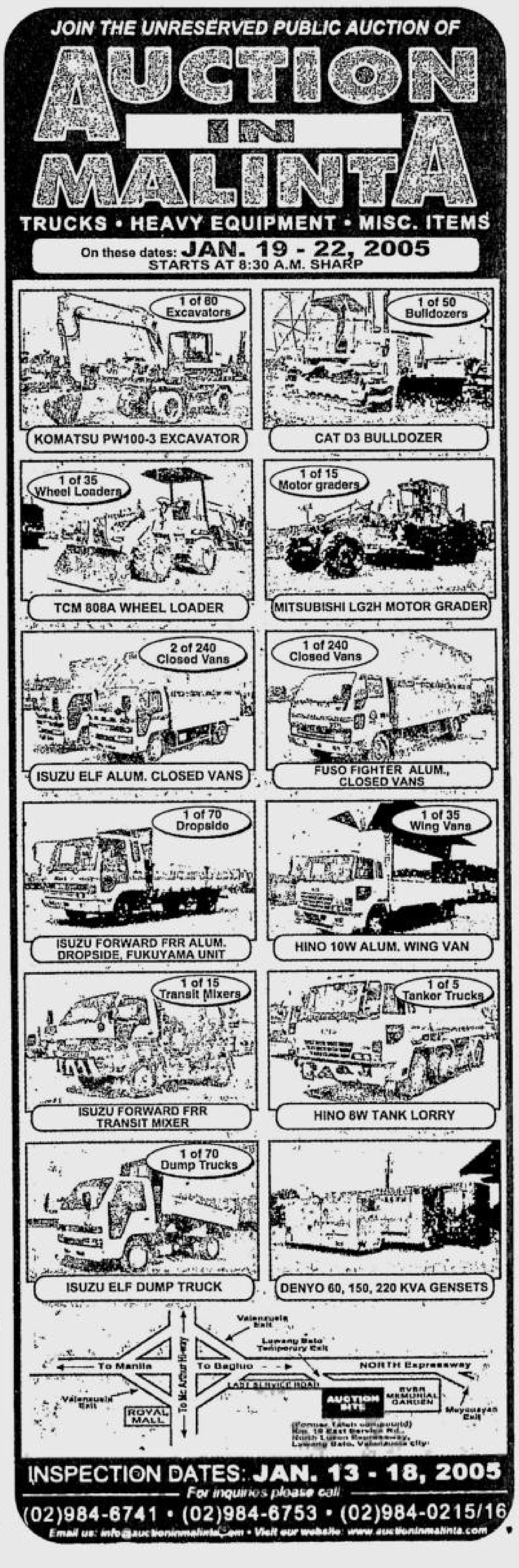
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SPORTS

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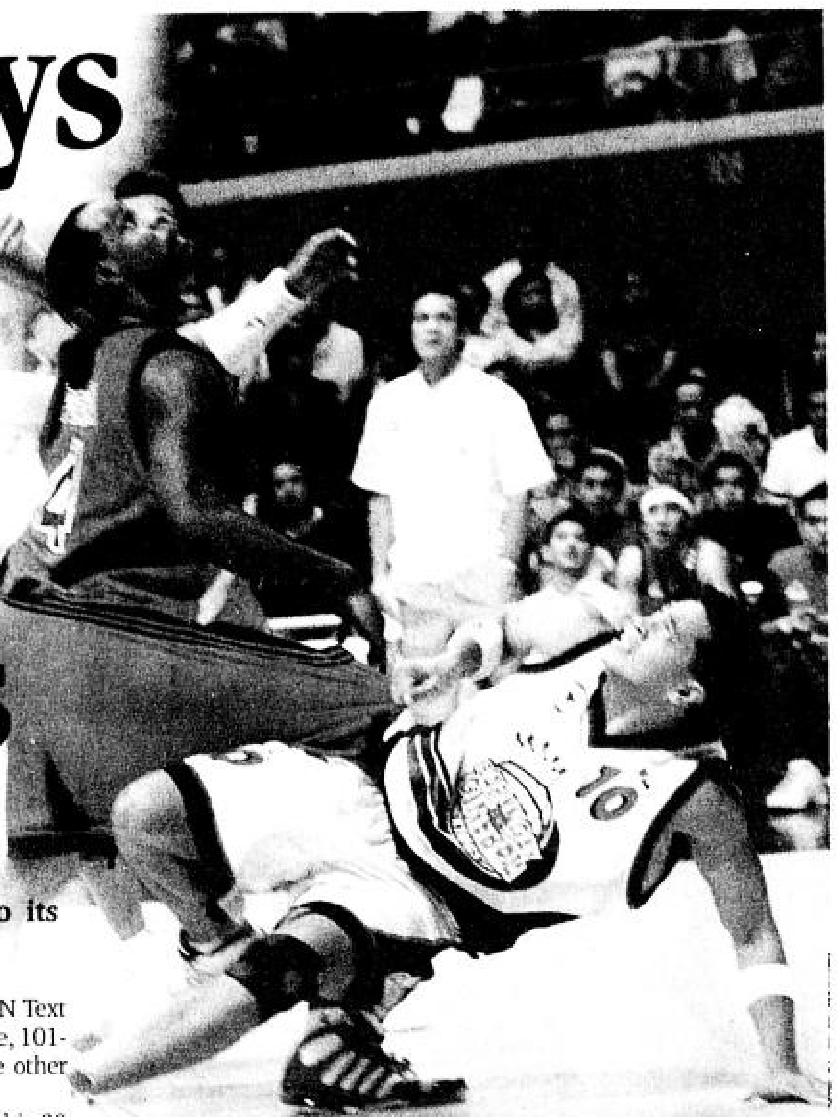
Seigle keys San Mig victory over Gins



GINEBRA'S Romel Adducul grabs the shorts of San Miguel's Dorian Peña as he hits the floor during a rebound play. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

By June Navarro

BARANGAY Ginebra must find a quick solution to its matchup woes against Danny Seigle.

Seigle was virtually unstoppable in spearheading San Miguel Beer to a 96-87 victory over Barangay Ginebra at the start of their Gran Matador PBA Philippine Cup semifinal duel last night at the Araneta Coliseum.

With nobody quick and tall enough to contain him, Seigle spewed 32 points and grabbed 13 rebounds to help the Beermen stretch their victory run to five games since the playoffs began.

At 6-foot-5, the shifty Seigle frolicked in the backcourt, shaking off every defender thrown at him and leaving the Ginebra coaching staff with a big puzzle to solve in tomorrow's Game 2 of the best-of-five series.

Seigle also drew tremendous support from Nic Belasco, Olsen Racela, Dondon Hontiveros and Danny Ildefonso, who made life even more difficult for the Gin Kings.

"Danny S knows when to shoot or pass. He didn't force attempts and waited for the right opportunities," said San Miguel coach Jong Uichico.

Ildefonso banged in 20 points, Belasco had 17 points and 12 boards, Racela made 13 points and Hontiveros finished off the Gin Kings with a defensive gem and scoring a crucial layup on the other end.

"Though it's a long series, it's always important to get the first win. Despite the (bad) calls, we didn't relax and kept our focus on the task at hand," said Uichico, whose Beermen are in their first semifinal appearance since the 2003 Reinforced Conference.

Coming off a three-and-a-half week break, the Gin Kings failed to find the offensive rhythm that carried them to the No. 1 seat after the elimination round and an outright seat in the semifinals.

In the second game, Talk 'N Text pounced on a weary Shell side, 101-89, to take the opener of the other semifinal series.

Willie Miller scored 17 of his 20 points in the second half, while Jim-

SEIGLE/ A22

GAMES TOMORROW
(*Araneta Coliseum*)
4:40 p.m.—Shell vs Talk 'N Text
7:30 p.m.—Barangay Ginebra vs San Miguel Beer

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SOLAR SPORTS SOLAR INTERACTIVE

PARAGUA

ANTONIO

No outright chess seeds to Manila SEAG

IT'S going to be a free-for-all battle for slots in the national chess team to this year's Manila Southeast Asian Games.

Even Grandmaster-candidate Mark Paragua—the highest-ranked Filipino player with an Elo of 2586—and GMs Joey Antonio, Eugene Torre, Bong Villamayor and Nelson Mariano will have to prove their worth against the regional finalists to make it to the RP team.

This came about after the National Chess Federation of the Philippines (NCFP) board decided to junk the traditional "outright seeding," which had been a source of griping by certain players.

Paragua's outright seeding to the RP team that saw action in last year's World Chess Olympiad in Spain drew vigorous protests from Antonio and Mariano.

Director Wilfredo Abalos said NCFP president Go Teng Kok supports the change.

International Master Ronald Bancod, the reigning Misamis Occidental Open champion, said holding a qualifying tournament would give chess players equal chances of representing the country.

Abalos, NCFP vice president Romeo Seratubias and officer Mila Emperado have been designated as co-project directors for a planned three-stage qualifying tournament.

The grand finals will pit the top 12 finishers in the semifinal round against Paragua, Antonio, Torre, Villamayor and Mariano. The latter did not join the grand finals last year in protest against the "outright seeding" policy.

Reigning Asian Zonal champion Ronald Dableo and IM Jayson Gonzales also backed the new policy but expressed surprise that they were not included among the players who do not have to pre-qualify to join the grand finals, tentatively set in October.

The Philippines won three gold and two bronze medals when chess made its debut in Vietnam. There, Paragua emerged as the most-bemedalled Filipino with three gold medals. The Vietnamese swept the four golds staked in the distaff side. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

Virtual title clash up in PBL s'finals

By Jasmine W. Payo

COACH Caloy Garcia isn't glad Welcoat is meeting defending champion Magnolia-FEU this early.

GAMES SATURDAY
(*Venue to be announced*)
2 p.m.—Granny Goose vs Montaña
4 p.m.—Welcoat vs Magnolia-FEU

"I guess this will be our finals," said Garcia after the Paintmasters arranged a best-of-three semifinal series against the Wizards in the PBL Open Championship last Tuesday.

And perhaps, Garcia is right. Against the hottest team in the league, Welcoat has no option but to prepare like it's the championship series.

Magnolia-FEU is riding a nine-game winning streak capped by an improbable comeback that shocked the Montaña Jewels last week. Demonstrating tremendous poise, the top-seeded Wizards won, 75-73, in overtime after trailing the Jewels by as many as 54-39 in the fourth quarter.

But Garcia sees a balanced semifinal matchup with the Wizards.

"We're really even with Magnolia, height- and skills-wise," he noted. "We also split our games in the elimination."

Undoubtedly, it's the presence of rookie Anthony Washington that has boosted Garcia's confidence. The 6-foot-7 Fil-Am, who has made the biggest impact in the league, recently showcased his awesome talents with 31 points and 15 rebounds.

But the Paintmasters aren't the only ones who boast a young sensation.

Granny Goose is another semifinalist whose offensive line is anchored on a rookie.

No one took much notice of the Tortillos in the pre-season until JR Quiñahan, a hefty 6-foot-6 center, continued to make believers every game.

After a momentary skid midway in the eliminations, the Tortillos recovered in time to set a semifinal contest against the Montaña Jewels, who are similarly enjoying a breakthrough conference.

In new recruit Alex Compton the Jewels have found the leader the team hasn't had in the last seven seasons.

And Tortillos coach Jun Tan is well aware of this.

"We have to focus on Compton," he said. "We lost our second game against Montaña because of Compton. But we won against them in the first round because of good defense. We just have to sustain that."

WELCOAT will start as underdog against Magnolia-FEU while Montaña is the prohibitive favorite against No. 3 qualifier Granny Goose in today's twin bill. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

PSC tossers eye key win vs Lady Tams

STANDINGS	W	L
UST	8	1
La Salle	8	1
Letran	5	4
PSC	5	4
Lyceum	4	5
FEU	1	8
San Sebastian	1	9

GAMES TODAY (*Rizal Coliseum*)
3 p.m.—PSC vs FEU
5 p.m.—Lyceum vs UST

THE RACE for the last two semifinal berths heats up today as Philippine Sports Commission, locked in a three-way battle for the third and fourth slots with Letran and Lyceum, tries to boost its bid against on ousted Far Eastern U squad today in the Shakey's V-League second conference at the Rizal Coliseum.

PSC hopes to rebound from its four-set loss to joint leader and defending champion University of Santo Tomas last Sunday although the Legends, tied with the Letran tossers for fourth with 5-4 marks, are expected to encounter stiff resistance from the 1-8 Lady Tams, who are out to play the spoilers' role.

Gametime is set at 3 p.m. Admission is free.

Lyceum takes on UST at 5 p.m. with the Lady Pirates needing a victory after dropping to fifth place with a 4-5 card following their loss to the La Salle spikers last Tuesday.

The PSC-FEU game will be shown at 8 tonight on IBC-13 while the Lyceum-UST encounter will be aired tomorrow, also starting at 8 p.m.

The event is sponsored by Shakey's Pizza in its effort to revive women's volleyball in the country. It is co-presented by Dunkin Donuts, HBC Home of Beauty Exclusives, Smart and PLDT with Mikasa and Accel as official volleyball and outfitter, respectively.

"We have to make do with what we have and play more as a team for us to make the semifinals," said PSC coach Ramon "Tatz" Suzara, referring to a roster badly depleted with starters Len Escollante and Theresa Dela Rosa out of the season due to injuries.

Escollante has a pinched nerve on her neck while Dela Rosa sustained an ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) injury. Both are members of the team that gave the country its last Southeast Asian Games gold medal in the 1993 Singapore Games.

Meanwhile, Lyceum is a definite underdog against UST, which shares the lead at 8-1 with La Salle.

"It's going to be tough for us especially because we're coming from a tough game against La Salle," said Lycuem mentor Emil Lontoc.

The Intramuros-based tossers are reeling from a 15-25, 19-25, 25-20, 19-25 defeat at the hands of the Taft-based Lady Archers Tuesday that dropped them out of the Magic Four.

Seigle keys . . .

From page A21

my Alapag added 20 for the Phone Pals.

The scores:

First Game

SAN MIGUEL 96—Seigle 32, Ildefonso 20, Belasco 17, Racela 13, Villoria 5, Hontiveros 4, Mente 3, Peña 2, Singson 0.

GINEBRA 87—Caguioa 35, Menk 26, Santos 8, Helterbrand 7, Adducul 4, Seigle 4, Dimaunahan 2, Noble 1, Salvacion 0.

Quarters: 20-22, 40-38, 64-61, 96-87.

Second Game

TALK 'N TEXT 101—Miller 20, Alapag 20, Pablo 16, Telan 15, Ravena 9, De Ocampo 8, Gelig 4, Camaso 4, Fran 3, Belano 2, Salangsang 0.

SHELL 89—Mamaril 22, Dela Cruz 16, Alvarez 12, Calaguio 9, Cruz 8, Yap 6, Sta. Maria 5, Ferreria 4, Sotto 4, Jackson 2, Bajar 1, Tubid 0.

Quarters: 26-15, 50-36, 78-65, 101-89.

QUICK-8 champ Montecillo (right) receives his trophy from Bebot Reyes of Activity Asia.

Pamintuan rules drag series

NELSON Pamintuan lost the final round race to Team Bolt-On's Michael dela Cruz last weekend but accumulated enough points to rule the Pro Class category in the 2004 Petron Blaze Shootout National Drag Race Championship series.

Dela Cruz timed 12.88 seconds in a Honda Civic to easily beat Pamintuan's Jeepstar (13.25 secs). Earlier, Pamintuan (13.25) nipped Conrado Estrella (13.36) to earn the right to face Dela Cruz in the finals.

In other final round races, Dondi Montecillo of Team ATI/DGL, on board a turbocharged hybrid, topped the Quick 8 class by outsprinting Steve Caldwell in a Garage Power '71 Camaro, 11.94 secs. to 12.36 secs.

Tristan Pangilinan of Team Cabspeed outshone Tyrone Sason of Autoworx and Liner Pascual of Team Autocraft. The final run saw Teddy Galang's Autoworx Civic stop the timers at 16.40 secs., beating the Accord of Carlo Manuel (17.86 secs.)

Shell's big heart

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

I WROTE this immediately after Shell had defeated Purefoods on Tuesday evening, 106-95. I just couldn't control myself racing quickly to my laptop to pound away at this column right after the game.

Sportswriter's instinct?

Strike while the rod is hot?

Force of habit?

I don't know. Maybe, all three.

Perhaps, too, after decades into it, I mean after being in this job for so long, the urge to write about something that is both extraordinary and not as natural as shooing away a fly—pesky or not.

This was not an extraordinary game to begin with. There was drama, yes. But Purefoods was the trailer all the way. No see-saw battle. No meaningful deadlocks, too.

But whether we like or not, the game took the dimension of a championship tiff, never mind that it was a no-more-tomorrow game. Winner-take-all.

Purefoods was not only fighting for dear life. It was also after history. Tradition, if you wish.

But, boy, what was happening?

Before this, Shell had been Purefoods' favorite whipping boy. How come roles had been reversed?

Why was Shell suddenly in command, pummeling its former tormentor, contra fella if you wish, virtually from beginning to end?

This was myth. Fiction has usurped fact. What's this, a rip-off, in the realm of the senses replacing reality?

OK, before this contest, Shell had snatched one game. But overall in this conference, Purefoods was ahead, 3-1, in their head-to-head duel. How come this night, this night of nights, Purefoods became the catch-up kid?

"Shell played with more intensity than us," said Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio, a picture of perfect grace in defeat, humility personified in the midst of debacle. "And yes, the return of (Ronald) Tubid made all the difference."

You've got to give credit to Ryan. He never mentioned the one factor that was in the mind of every fan present at the Cuneta Astrodome this night, this night of nights: fatigue. In six days, Purefoods played five times—thrice against Shell, winning just once in their best-of-3 affair with Shell to bow out of the tournament.

You've got to give credit to Ryan. He never blurted out any alibi. To me, he was down, but never out.

Even before Tuesday's Game 3 begun, Joel Banal, the Talk 'N Text coach, said that if Tubid plays, Purefoods could be in trouble.

Tubid, returning after resting an injured foot for two weeks, became the spark for Shell, firing back-to-back triples to sandwich a basket by Rich Alvarez ending the third quarter to give Shell a 77-61 bubble going into the fourth and last quarter.

Shell coach Leo Austria talked of a velocity that powered Shell to a PBA semifinals for the first time in seven conferences.

I would say Shell had velocity not only in Tubid Tuesday night. Include the never-been-used Ervin Sotto, who played quality minutes before fouling out with still 9:23 left in the game.

And, yes, include Tony dela Cruz, limited to only 7 points in the first half, who finished with 27 for the game, besides snaring 8 rebounds and doing 10-of-16 from the line.

For a while there, it appeared like Shell, running low on gas, would wilt in the end.

But after Shell's 21-point lead got cut to just 8 with under 2 minutes left, Jun Limpot, the hottest Hotdog this night, fouled out with 1:44 remaining, Purefoods trailing, 89-97. Limpot left the game with 28 points to his name. With his departure, Purefoods was doomed.

"This is a team with a big heart," said Austria, whose Turbo Chargers were set to do battle with the TNT Phone Pals last night at the start of their best-of-5 series. "It is this same big heart that, with the help of Dear God, will try to defeat TNT."

Fighting words, huh?

Deserves another column, maybe, should it happen. Again.

***

FASTBREAK. My friends from Roxas City, like Nelson, Ling and Dudoy, have not stopped swooning over Eddie Almonguerra's famed Eddie's Litson in Brgy. Dayao. Eddie, an avid PBA and boxing fan and rates Manny Pacquiao the best Filipino boxer of all time, can be reached at 09274983007 for special order of his succulent *litson*.

SPORTSWATCH

Tigers kick off PBA mall tour

THE COCA-COLA Tigers kick off the PBA teams' visit to the Ever-Gotesco chain of malls today as they grace the PBA Timeout@Ever Malls at Ever Grand Central where they will meet and mingle with their fans beginning at 4 p.m. The pro league, in cooperation with Ever Malls, has lined up a series of sports activities at the various Ever-Gotesco malls to give its fans the chance to interact with their favorite players and teams outside of the playing venue. The FedEx Express take their turn on Saturday, also at Grand Central, while the Alaska Aces will have their team marketing day on Jan. 29. Also featured in the tour are the PBA interactive display, photo gallery, hand and shoe prints, a giant inflatable basketball hoop, graffiti wall and a half court.

Sportswriter's wife dies

DOLORES Abalos, wife of Tempo sportswriter Clyde Mariano, died of cancer last Tuesday, Jan. 18 at their residence at Block 5, Lot 26 Banaba St. Camella Sorrento Subd. in Bacoor, Cavite. She was 61. She is survived by her husband and children Joey, Danny and Gwendolyn. Interment will be on Sunday at 2 p.m. at the Silangan Memorial Garden in Brgy. Ligas II, Bacoor, Cavite.

World Slasher Cup semis today

ANOTHER packed crowd is expected at the 17,000-seater Araneta Coliseum today when the World Slasher Cup 8-Cock Derby semifinal round blasts off at 2 p.m. Bobby Fairchild of Oklahoma and Jessy Palmares (Clear Creek ARC Angel), Sunset Cocker of the Year Joe Wolcott and Jun Santiago (Joe Firefly Thunderbird 12) were among the two-pointers during Tuesday's elimination round participated in by a record field of 113 entries. Joe Sanford of California (Sanford Firebird II) and Yellow Rose Ito Kuya entry from Alabama tallied 1.5 points each while Roger Roberts has two wins in four matches (Thunderbird Hatchet I and II). The formidable tandem of Patrick Antonio and Jun Santiago (Complexor 3000 Firefly 14) also posted two victories, along with Dicky Lim (Winslet Spencer Paniqui), Biboy Enriquez (Tanay Firebird), Frank Berin (Mulawin and Super SS Owls Nest Mulawin), Boy Marso (BM Bulalayaw RB), Marcel Julao (MTJ Bros Ray II); Jet Fernando and Jun Jingco (Jimafer Jvlet PBRJ I) among others.

7-cocker set at LPC

THE GENTLEMEN Cockers Association of the Philippines 7-Cock Derby is scheduled at the Las Piñas Coliseum this Monday and Wednesday with Sagupaan Complexor 3000 as sponsor. The underrated That's It entry of Negros breeder Raffy Yulo topped the first leg last Jan. 10 and 12 after tallying six wins and one loss. Runner-up finishers, with five wins apiece, were Patrick Antonio (Sabong Pinoy Live), Benjie Lim (Burahod Nim Kauswagan), Dini Cuenca and Dante Hinlo (Dini and Dante), Binangonan (Gov. Ito Ynares and Mayor Nene Aguilar), Gerry Ramos (Against All Odds). Meanwhile, the third round eliminations of Pamigay Premyo 5-Cock Derby unfolds on Saturday. For inquiries, call 873-1040, 874-3910 and 0910-5609404.

Gamefowl breeding free clinic

WORLD-RENOWNED gamefowl breeder Bruce Barnett of Blackwater, Jasper, Alabama, will conduct a free clinic on gamefowl breeding, conditioning, etc. on Friday starting at 1 p.m. at the new Gateway Theater beside Araneta Coliseum in Cubao, Quezon City. Respected and admired by cockfighters and rooster-raisers because of his Sweater lines of fighting cocks, Barnett is competing in the World Slasher Cup International 8-Cock Derby, alongside partner Sonny Lagon (Blue Blade). The clinic is sponsored by Thunderbird Power Feeds and Univet. For reservations, call tel. 638-8332; 631-8501 loc. 7737 or 8850. Participants are required to bring five empty packs of any Thunderbird products or a combination thereof.

Roligon derby lures 168 entries

ROLIGON Mega Cockpit's P4-Million 15th Anniversary 7-Cock Derby set from Jan. 29 to Feb. 9 gears toward setting a new record with 168 entries making their lot reservations at press time. The six-day derby stakes a guaranteed prize of P4 million and a 3-door 2800 Pajero for an easy-on-the-pocket entry fee of P12,000 and minimum bet of P5,500. Hosted by Roligon-owner Rolly Ligon, the event is sponsored by Thunderbird Power Feeds. Four separate 3-cock elimination rounds are set on Jan. 29, 31; Feb. 2 and 5. Day champion prizes of P100,000 for each elimination event await the three-pointers. All those with two points or less in the preliminaries take on each other in the semifinals set on Feb. 7 with a day champion's prize of P500,000. The 4-cock championship takes center stage on Feb. 9.

DE VEGA is thinking things over.

Keon, De Vega eyed to boost SEAG buildup

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE PHILIPPINE Sports Commission wants the famous Gintong Alay team back.

PSC officer-in-charge Butch Ramirez yesterday confirmed he has offered key positions to former Gintong Alay chief Michael Keon and his former star athlete Lydia de Vega-Mercado to boost the country's campaign in the Southeast Asian Games this November.

Keon and Mercado, however, asked for a few weeks to think things over, according to Ramirez.

Ramirez said he wants Keon to serve as the national training director and Mercado to be the consultant-liaison between the government sports agency and the 600-plus national athletes.

"That is Mike's forte, training the athletes, so we need him to help us," Ramirez told the INQUIRER.

The former Gintong Alay boss was responsible for the country's track and field renaissance early in the 1980s with the emergence of track aces De Vega-Mercado, Isidro del Prado and Elma Muros-Posadas.

Ramirez said half of his former office on the third floor of the PSC building has already been reserved for Keon.

A nephew of former President Ferdinand Marcos, Keon also served as president of the Philippine Olympic Committee in the early '80s. He is currently the Ilocos Norte sports council chair.

Mercado, a two-time Asian Games 100-meter gold medalist, is now a town councilor of Meycauayan, Bulacan. She was earlier rumored as a prospective choice as PSC commissioner.

KEON: Training chief?

Tuason back in PSC as First Gent's 'eyes'

BUTCH Tuason has returned to the Philippine Sports Commission.

. But the former PSC chair won't be assuming the position he held from 1998 to 2001. Tuason, also a former shooting association president, will serve as the "eyes" of First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo in the agency, particularly in the disbursement of funds from the FG Foundation to the national athletes.

His appointment as liaison officer for the FG Foundation was announced by Arroyo himself last Tuesday during a pledging session with heads of the country's top corporations and big businessmen at Malacañang. The event raised about P150 million for the training of the athletes for the Southeast Asian Games this November.

Newly installed PSC executive director Guillermo Iroy said Tuason will monitor corporate contributions to the Alay na Gintong Medalya of the First Gentleman.

Tuason, the predecessor of Eric Buhain who was in turn replaced by officer-in-charge Butch Ramirez two weeks ago, is a consultant in the office of Sen. Jinggoy Estrada.

"His salary will come from the FG Foundation," said Iroy of Tuason.

The money raised by the foundation will go directly to the athletes, unlike two years ago when most of the P22 million raised by Arroyo for the Vietnam Southeast Asian Games were coursed through the PSC.

SECOND COMING: Tuazon

Ramirez said the PSC still needs to enhance its image as a transparent body considering that the sports agency works on a budget of about P500 million annually. Marc Anthony Reyes

NGAP head hails 'project director' revival

NATIONAL Golf Association of the Philippines president Benny Gopez yesterday hailed the revival of the "project director" program for sports.

"It is the best thing that ever happened to Philippine sports in a long, long while," said Gopez, who assumed the NGAP presidency last year unopposed. "If there's a renaissance in sports that we all love to talk about, this is it."

First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo unveiled the "project director" scheme on Tuesday at Malacañang in a meeting with the country's sports officials led by the presidents of the 42 or so national sports associations.

ARROYO

Arroyo has tapped the support of the private sector to help inject muscle to the country's declining power in the region.

It has been his dream to see the Philippines win the SEA Games overall crown this November in Manila.

The "project director" scheme in sports was introduced in the early '80s and, to a certain extent, it scored immediate breakthroughs until the Edsa Revolt in 1986 scuttled it down.

Arroyo has already drawn the support of some of the nation's major captains of industry, including Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, Ricky Razon and Hermie Esguerra.

Cojuangco's San Miguel Beer will handle basketball, Razon's ICTSI golf and Esguerra's Herma Shipping softball.

Razon was in the United States during Arroyo's meeting with the NSA presidents. But Razon sent his cousin, Luigi Tabuena, to represent him in the occasion.

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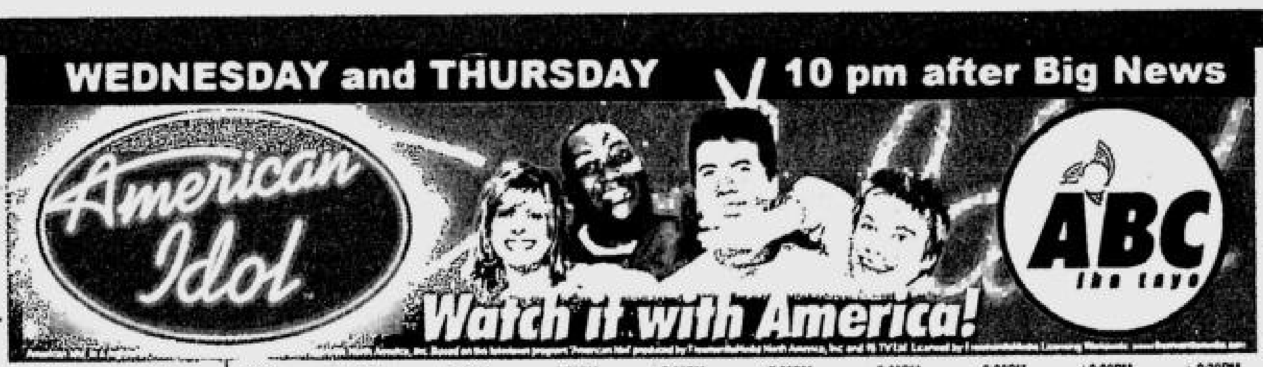
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Thursday, January 20, 2005



WEDNESDAY and THURSDAY 10 pm after Big News
American Idol
Watch it with America!
ABC
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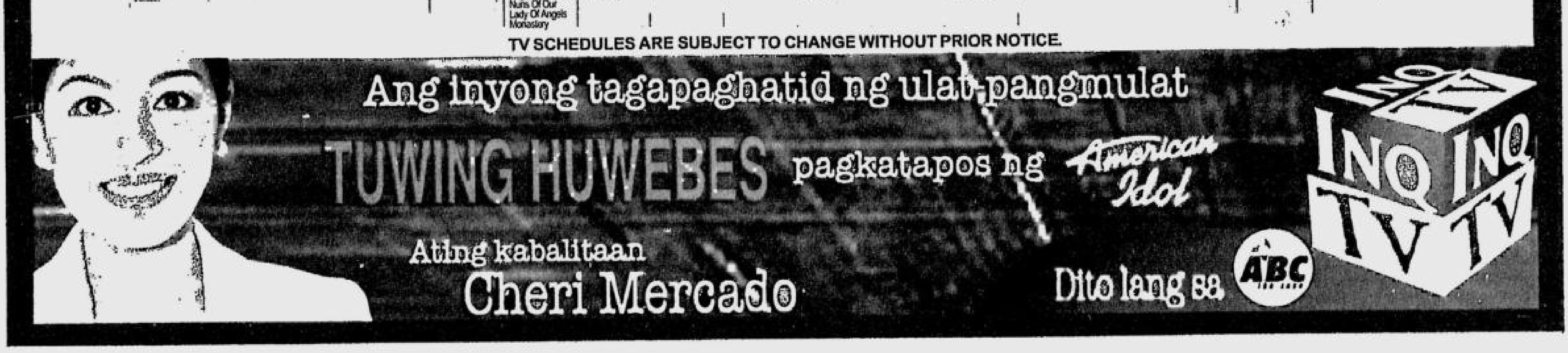
Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM
ABS-CBN 2				Showbiz No. 1	Sandara's Romance	Get Backers	Ragnarok	Masked Rider Ryuki	TV Patrol
NBN		Taiwan/ Winner TV Shopping		Value Vision	Teledyaryo	Value Vision	Next Stop		
ABC 5			Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko	PBA					Sentro
GMA 7	Leya (2:45 PM)	Joyride (3.15PM)	Snow Angel (3.45PM)		One Piece	Witch Hunter Robin	Slam Dunk	24 Oras	
RPN 9	Metro TV Shopping			Hey Arnold!	As Told By Ginger	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	Entertainment Tonight	Wrestling
IBC 13		V League				IBC Express Balita		Pangarap Kong Jackpot	
Solar		WWE Smackdown				Mutant League	Heavy Gear	Maxsteel	Dungeons And Dragons
Nickelodeon	Dora, The Explorer	Little Bear	Blues Clues	SpongeBob SquarePants	All That	Are You Afraid of the Dark?	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron
MYX		Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten	
ETC		Good Morning Miami	What I Like About You	The Today Show		Starting Over		NBC Nightly News	Entertainment Tonight
Cinema One		Kaputol Ng Isang Awit				Dekada 70			
Studio 23	Bewitched	Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	UAAP				X-Men Evolution	Samurai Deeper Kyo
AXN		Framed				The Amazing Race		Samurai X	Samurai X
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Home Improvement	Ally McBeal		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show
CNN				Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport
National Geographic	On Assignment	Innovation		Frontiers Of Construction		Riddles Of The Dead		The Snake Wranglers	Croc Chronicles Dr. Brady Barr
Solar Sports		FIVB World Grand Prix Cuba vs. Germany			Sounds of the Finals	GWS ep.55	Boxing Klitschko vs Williams (Replay)		
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens	The Fix	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Molto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped
HBO				Our America			Real Life		
Star Movies			Tequila Express (3.45 PM)			Moonlight Mile (5 15 PM)			
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	Sylvester & Tweety Mysteries	Police Academy	He-Man & The Masters Of Univ	Teen Titans
ESPN		World Pool League '04 Warsaw, Poland		Pro Billiards '04 Trick Shot Magic NY, USA		World Pool Masters '04 Ann Zoo, Holland		Premier Snooker League '04 Cardiff Wales	
Disney Channel	Kim Possible	Totally Spies	Lizzie Mcguire	Even Stevens	That's So Raven	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	The Legend Of Tarzan	Lilo & Stitch/Untalkative Bunny
Cinemax			Anzio		Keep The Faith, Baby				The One
Hallmark Channel	Mad About You	Shadow Lake				Play With Me Sesame	Sesame Street		Bewitched
Discovery Channel		Hour Asia				Wild Discovery		Ultimate Discovery	
MTV Philippines		MTV Asia Hitlist		Non-Stop Hits		Non-Stop Hits		MTV Get Spotted	MTV Loveline
Sports Plus	Fed Cup finals Match 1 & 2								Porsche rnd 2&4
EWTN	A Christian Pilgrimage To Jordan	Angelus (3.15PM)	Suffering Church	Angel Force	Children's Rosary	The Holy Rosary With Mother Angelica and the Nuns Of Our Lady Of Angels Monastery	The Spirit Of Catholic Leadership	Saints: A Closer Look	EWTN Gallery

Channel	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2	Spirits	Krystala	Lovers In Paris	Hiram	Star Circle Nat'l Teen Quest	Maalaala Mo Kaya			Insider	Dong Puno
NBN	Network Forum		Teledyaryo		World Pool Master					
ABC 5	PBA					Big News	Inq TV		Fearless Fighting	Billboard On-Air
GMA 7	Extra Challenge		Mulawin	Starstruck (8.45PM)	Forever In My Heart (9.15.PM)		Magpakailanman			Saksi
RPN 9		NBA On RPN					Newswatch Now	Video Hit Parade	Kasangga Mo Ang Langit	Police Hour
IBC 13	Retro TV		Travel	Japan Video Topic		Entrepinoy	Good Take	IBC News Tonite		
Solar	Babylon V		Thunder Box		JAG		Playing God			
Nickelodeon	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	As Told By Ginger	Nick Mix		100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd				Rugrats
MYX	Mellow MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	MYX Presents		My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC	Will & Grace	JKX	Ed		Girls Behaving Badly	Simple Life 2	Tonight Show With Jay Leno		Blind Date	Fifth Wheel
Cinema One	Hawak Ko Buhay Mo				Pepeng Agimat				Sanggano	
Studio 23	Wazzup Wazzup		Barkada Nights				News Central	The Oprah Winfrey Show		Spin City
AXN	Beastmaster		30 Seconds To Fame	30 Seconds To Fame	Record Setters		She Creature			
Star World	Star News Asia	Friends	Sing: Inside The Songs Of Sacred Love		The Chronicle News From The Edge		My Big Fat Obnoxious Fiance		Friends	Sing: Inside The Songs Of Sacred Love
CNN	Business International		World News Asia		World News	Global Office	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
National Geographic	Wild		About Asia		Nat'l Geographic Specials		Innovation		Frontiers Of Construction	
Solar Sports			NBA TV Daily	NBA TV Daily	NBA Game L.A. Clippers @ Sn Antonio					NBA Action
Lifestyle Network	Tyler's Ultimate	E! News Weekend		Good Finds	Clean House		Breathing Room	Genuine Article	Guess Who's Coming To Decorate	
HBO	Raiders Of The Lost Ark (7'05 PM)				Lara Croft: Tomb Raider: The Cradle Of Life				Suspect (10.55PM)	
Star Movies	Desperately Seeking Susan				Life Or Something Like It			Jet Lag (10.45PM)		
Cartoon Network	Yu-Gi-Oh!	Gundam Seed	The Looney Tunes Show		The Powerpuff Girls	Codename Kids Next Door	Mr. T	Josie And The Pussycats	Boomerang - Boomeraction	Yu-Gi-Oh!
ESPN			Sportscenter Taiwan	Pool/Snooker Mosconi Cup '04		Pro Billiards '04 Sudden Death 7-Ball NY USA		2004 Women's Tournament of Champions		Sportscenter Asia
Disney Channel	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	According To Jim	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney	
Cinemax			Deconstructing Sarah			Deranged				
Hallmark Channel	Agency II		Strong Medicine		Jack			Sue Thomas: F.B.Eye		Agency II (11.25PM)
Discovery Channel	Monster Garage		Ultimate Cars	Building The Ultimates	Wild Science		Ultimate Discovery		Power Zone	
MTV Philippines	Non-Stop Hits	MTV U-Break	MTV Jams	Non-Stop Hits	TRL		Globally Dismissed	Pimp My Ride	VH1 Hits/ Video Collection	
Sports Plus	Golf Academy 2002	Inside the PGA	Raceworld		Nopi	Bikini	WTA L.A. Davenport vs. Myskina			
EWTN	EWTN Live With Father Mitch Pacwa		Pope John Paul's Legacy To The Family	Council Of Faith	Daily Mass		Angelus (10:15PM)	Holy Spirit In The Church	The Journey Home	

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.



Ang inyong tagapaghatid ng ulat-pangmulat
TUWING HUWEBES pagkatapos ng American Idol
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Cheri Mercado
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Federer survives qualifier

Williams, Sharapova, Mauresmo advance

THE RUSSIAN charge takes different forms in the Australian Open. Teen sensation Maria Sharapova struggled to advance, while men's star Marat Safin cruised to the next round.

REUTERS

MELBOURNE, Australia—Top-seeded Roger Federer extended his winning streak to 23 matches Wednesday, but had to hold off a net-charging qualifier ranked 203rd to advance to the third round of the Australian Open.

The 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 victory over Takao Suzuki of Japan kept Federer on track for a possible quarterfinal meeting with four-time winner Andre Agassi, who cruised through 6-3, 6-1, 6-0 after the man he beat in the 2003 final, Rainer Schuettler, squandered five break points early, then fell apart.

Suzuki broke in the fifth game before defending champion Federer started finding the passing alleys and ran off four straight games to take the first set.

En route to 96 net approaches, the energetic 1.75-meter (5-foot-9) Suzuki was quickly dripping sweat on a cool evening and earned the admiration of a crowd that had expected to see a quick rout. He had to win three qualifying matches, then beat Jan-Michael Gambill on Monday for his second victory in the main draw of a Grand Slam.

"It's a fantastic match," said Federer, who was nearly tongue-tied. "My emotions are too high."

Agassi, who hasn't completely recovered from a torn hip tendon that had threatened his participation here, was reassured by his form.

"To say it was 100 percent would probably be overstating it," said Agassi.

While the victory put him a little closer to his ninth Grand Slam title, Agassi said he has nothing to brag about at home. Wife Steffi Graf won 22.

"I've won a lot of tournaments, but I still come second at home," he said.

Marat Safin, who tied a record with 30 sets spanning more than 20 hours in seven matches last year, is trying to conserve energy after running out of gas in the 2004 final against Federer. The fourth-seeded Russian needed only an hour and 21 minutes to oust Bohdan Ulihrach, 6-4, 6-1, 6-3.

Putting a doping allegation out of her mind, US Open champion Svetlana Kuznetsova, seeded fifth, took out her frustrations on Marion Bartoli, 6-2, 6-0, in just 40 minutes.

Seventh-seeded Serena Williams lost only seven points in the second set in a 6-3, 6-0 win over Dally Randriantefy in 48 minutes.

But second-seeded Amelie Mauresmo and Wimbledon champion Maria Sharapova both had to bounce back after losing the first sets in their matches.

Sharapova, a 17-year-old Russian who beat Williams in the last Wimbledon final, committed 44 unforced errors against Lindsay Lee-Waters before winning, 4-6 6-0 6-3. Mauresmo, the Olympic silver medalist and runner-up here in 1999, overcame poor serving in the first set and reeled off the last 10 games in a 2-6, 6-1, 6-0 win over 18-year-old Dinara Safina, Marat Safin's sister. *AP*

Patriots hit free throws, shoot down Generals

GAMES TOMORROW (*Pasay Sports Complex*)
2 p.m.—PUP vs NCBA
4 p.m.—Arellano vs St. Francis

ROGER Nacpil banged in 17 points as La Salle-Dasmariñas stunned Emilio Aguinaldo College, 81-77, yesterday in the 12th National Capital Region Athletic Association (NCRAA) men's basketball quarterfinals at the Pasay Sports Complex.

His four free throws in the last 20.3 seconds slowed down the EAC Generals' charge from 13 points down at the end of the third period and ensured the Patriots' second straight win in the quarterfinals.

It was also the Patriots' first triumph over the Generals since Ephraim Serrano started handling the team four years ago. The Generals saw their eight-game winning run since the eliminations broken and fell to 1-1 in the quarterfinals.

Niño Songco scored six of his 16 points in the last 1:52 as the Generals came to within 72-77.

Ken Rivera struck with 32 points as Colegio de San Lorenzo pulverized National College of Business and Arts, 88-69.

He joined hands for 14 points with Chito Jaime as the Griffins ripped the game apart at halftime, 44-32.

The scores:

First Game

CDSL 88—Rivera 32, Jaime 15, Lim 12, Puno 8, Baena 8, Galvez 6, Malig 3, Gran 2, Badley 2.

NCBA 69—De la Cruz 28, Tingzon 13, Ruales 12, Torculas 8, Hostellero 7, Bacsal 1, Ofalia 0, Sibal 0.

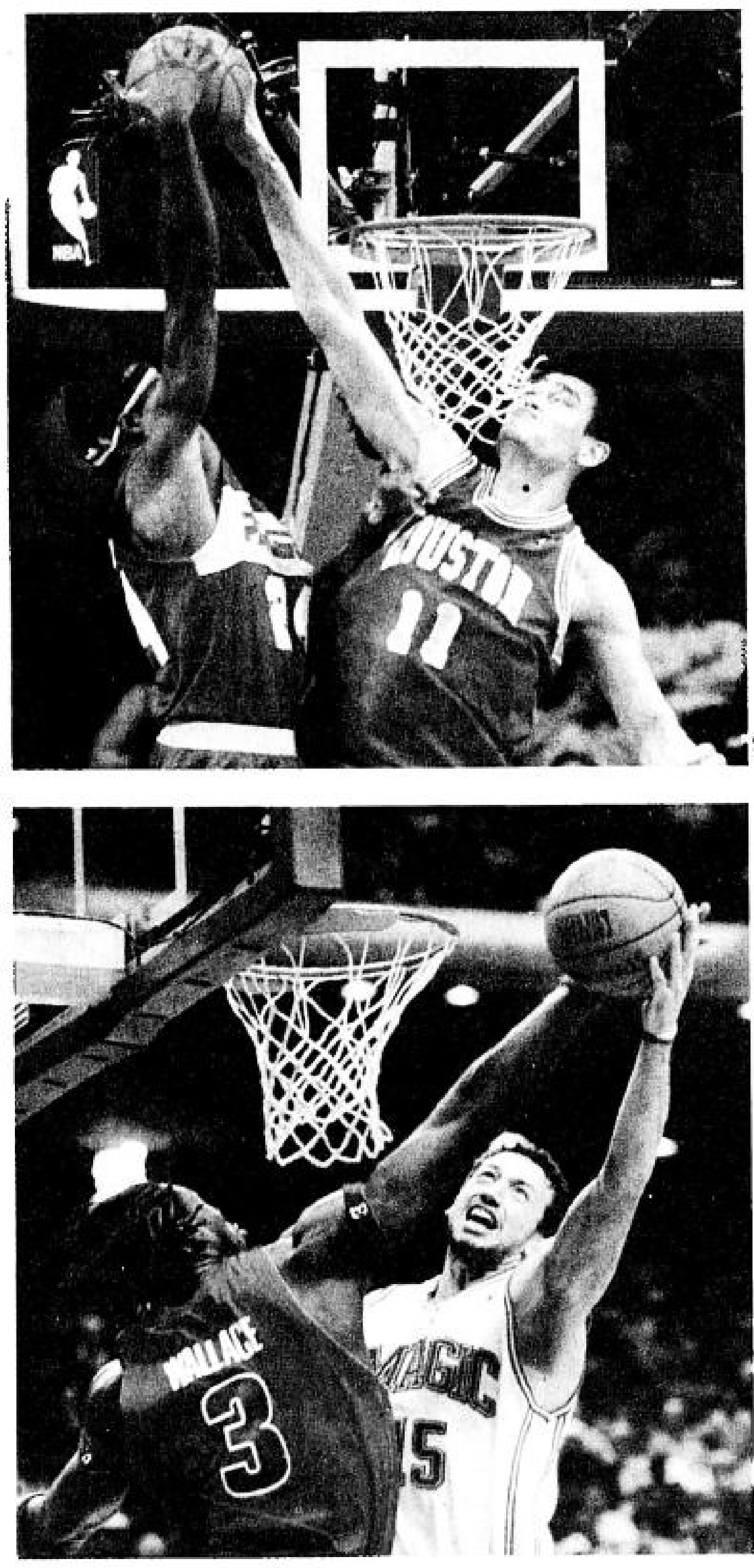
Halftime: 44-30.

Second Game

LA SALLE-DASMARIÑAS 81—Nacpil 17, Macalma 12, Porto 10, Junatas 9, Patambang 7, Protacio 7, Baguio 5, Lasin 4, Moncayo 4, Canlas 3, Salado 3.

EAC 77—Melocoton 29, Songco 16, Buenafe 15, Musni 8, Du 6, Esplanada 2, Rivera 0, Valderama 0, Sabado 0, Castillo 0.

Halftime: 40-37



AP

REUTERS

DEFENSE is not always the key. Despite solid blocks by Houston's Yao Ming and Detroit's Ben Wallace, the Rockets and the Pacers went on to lose their assignments.

Magic zap Pistons' win run; Webber lifts Kings

ORLANDO, Florida—Steve Francis scored 32 points and Hedo Turkoglu added a season-high 29 Tuesday as the Orlando Magic snapped the Detroit Pistons' six-game winning streak with a 103-101 victory.

Doug Christie, playing his first home game since being acquired in a trade from Sacramento a week ago, hit a go-ahead 3-pointer with 1:26 remaining. That shot, which put the Magic up 98-96, highlighted a 20-6 stretch run.

"We went toe-to-toe with the reigning world champion and we didn't blink," Orlando coach Johnny Davis said. "We brought it to them and we made plays down the stretch."

"I was a little nervous coming home to play the world champs, then not really knowing the plays was difficult," said Christie, who had nine points and tied his season high with four steals.

In the closing seconds, Christie's tight defense on Richard Hamilton kept the Pistons from getting off a good shot.

In Houston, Jamaal Tinsley scored 28 points, including six during a key 10-0 run in the fourth quarter, and Jermaine O'Neal added 27 as Indiana downed Houston, 87-74.

The 10-0 run came after a 63-63 tie with 9:31 to play, and the Pacers never led by fewer than six the rest of the way.

In Dallas, Jerry Stackhouse scored a season-high 29 points and Dirk Nowitzki had 28 points to surpass 10,000 for his career as Dallas racked up the most points in the NBA this season to beat Washington, 137-120.

Jason Terry scored 26 points and Michael Finley added 25 to help the Mavericks to their seventh win in the last nine games.

In Sacramento, California, Chris Webber scored eight of his 32 points in overtime and also had 13 rebounds, six assists and four steals as Sacramento beat Portland, 113-107, for its fifth straight victory.

Nick Van Exel forced overtime by hitting a baseline 3-pointer with 8.6 seconds left in regulation, then had another chance in the extra period but missed a 3 under pressure with 14 seconds left.

After starting the game 0-for-5, Cuttino Mobley had 20 points, six assists and four rebounds, making four 3-pointers.

In Seattle, Earl Boykins broke the NBA record for points in an overtime, scoring 15 of Denver's 21 points in the extra period as the Nuggets, without two key players, beat Seattle, 116-110.

Boykins, a 1.65-meter (5-foot-5) guard who is the league's smallest player, broke the record of 14 overtime points set by Butch Carter of Indiana against Boston on March 20, 1984.

The Nuggets lost Carmelo Anthony when he sprained his right ankle early in the fourth quarter. They also played without Kenyon Martin, who missed the game with a case of strep throat. *AP*

Antonio drops to eighth

FILIPINO GM Rogelio "Joey" Antonio Jr. bowed to French GM Arnaud Hauchard in the fifth round Tuesday and dropped to 8th place in the 2005 Montreal World Chess Tournament being held at the Saint-Laurent Recreation Center in Montreal, Canada.

Antonio got stuck at 2.0 points following his second loss in the 10-man Category 10 (average Elo 2496) event.

The 42-year-old Antonio scored his lone win at the expense of IM Eric Lawson of Canada in the opening round. Handling black, he managed to draw with Israeli GM Victor Mikhalevski in the second round and American GM John Fedorowicz in the fourth round.

Antonio was upset by 17-year-old Canadian IM Roussel-Roozmon Thomas in the third round.

World No. 1 women's player GM Zsuzha Polgar of the United States and FIDE president emeritus Florencio Campomanes of the Philippines graced the inaugurals of the tournament, that uses the electronic chess score and real-time recording. *NM Marlon Bernardino*

DZMM advocacy race gets major backing

RADIO station dzMM's advocacy run "Takbo Para sa Kalikasan 5" set Feb. 20 on Roxas Boulevard has won the support of one of the oil industry's emerging players. Slated to start and finish at the Quirino Grandstand in Rizal Park, the race is expected to draw over 2,500 runners. Proceeds of the run will be used to help in the rehabilitation of Philippine mangroves. Nation Petroleum's entry as one of the event's major backers will give dzMM more room to go to areas where the mangroves have greatly deteriorated. Crisanto Canillo and Gloria Diaz topped last year's men's and women's 10-K races, with Jujet de Asis and Hazel Madamba winning the 5-K events. Olympian Eduardo Buenavista heads the more than 600 runners who have so far registered for the races. Registration is on-going at the ABS-CBN public affairs office. Listing at the RACE office at 51 Annapolis St. in Greenhills, San Juan, starts on Feb. 1.

Atienza backs Palarong Pambansa

ONE of the country's most active local government sports councils is appealing to the Philippine Sports Commission and the Department of Education to push through with the staging of the Palarong Pambansa this year. Manila Sports Council (Masco) chief Arnold "Ali" Atienza issued the appeal to PSC and Education officials, saying that the preparation and training of student-athletes would go to waste if the Palaro is again canceled. The Palaro is a feeder for the country's elite sports development program. Majority of national athletes sharpened their spurs in the annual multi-sport competition before being picked up by national sports associations to don RP Team colors in the international arena. Atienza said the Palaro is a tested breeding ground for talents, noting that sports stars like Lydia de Vega, Elma Muros and Eric Buhain were all products of the school-based sports development program. Atienza, who has been establishing linkages with the Philippine Association of Sports Coordinators, said Manila is thinking of ways to augment the lack of national competitions for the youth and is set to stage the 1st Manila Youth Games (MY Games) National Invitational, which will range the finest athletes from the capital city against those from all over the country.

Schoeman breaks swim world record

STOCKHOLM, Sweden—Roland Schoeman of South Africa broke one world record and narrowly missed another at the short course swimming World Cup on Tuesday.

Schoeman broke German Thomas Rupprath's world record in the 100-meter individual medley by .07 seconds, clocking 52.51 seconds in Eriksdalsbadet's fast short course pool. Fellow South African Ryk Neethling was second in 52.61 seconds.

Schoeman also dominated the 100 freestyle in 46.45 seconds, more than half a second ahead of Neethling. Schoeman's time was the fastest ever in a World Cup, but was two-tenths of a second behind American Ian Crocker's world record.

Ed Moses of the United States won both breaststroke events, continuing his unbeaten streak in the Swedish capital.

Moses won the 50-meter breaststroke in 26.75, and followed it up with a victory in the 200, clocking 2 minutes, 5 seconds.

With the two wins, Moses remained undefeated in Stockholm, where he swept all three breaststroke events last year and broke the 50 and 200 world records in 2002.

Swedish home favorites Josefin Lillhage and Therese Alshammar won the women's 200 freestyle and 50 freestyle respectively. *AP*

Clemens asks for record $22-M salary

NEW YORK—Roger Clemens followed a record-setting season with a record-setting salary request. Eric Gagne, another Cy Young Award winner, got a big deal, too.

After winning his seventh Cy Young pitching award, the Rocket asked for $22 million in salary arbitration Tuesday, easily topping the previous high of $18.5 million by New York Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter in 2001.

Clemens, who still hasn't decided whether to pitch this year or retire, was offered $13.5 million by his hometown Houston Astros. The $8.5 million difference was exactly double the previous record spread, set by the Yankees and Jeter.

"We are proceeding down the arbitration path as if Roger were going to play," Clemens' agent, Randy Hendricks, said. "He has not yet decided whether to play in 2005, but I expect him to do so by Feb. 1 at the latest."

Not only does Clemens wear No. 22 on his uniform, he would be playing his 22nd major league season.

"We looked at what some of the comparables were—Greg Maddux, Randy Johnson—and we tried to use those star-quality players to come up with a number," Astros general manager (GM) Tim Purpura said.

Rather than swap figures with the Dodgers, Gagne agreed to a $19 million (euro14.5 million), two-year deal with Los Angeles that contains a club option for 2007. Gagne, the 2003 National League Cy Young winner, has the right to void the option year, however, and become a free agent.

"We wanted to do everything we could to try to keep him," Dodgers GM Paul DePodesta said. *AP*

Starlets' lack of schooling makes them shallow, silly, stupid

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

A LOT of young talents are joining show biz these days, some via the TV talent search competitions, and others by more traditional routes. This is a positive development, because it assures the biz of a constant supply of fresh talent.

On the other hand, we're dismayed to hear that some (many?) of those young hopefuls have given up going to school so they can concentrate on making it in entertainment. Now, that's really bad news.

Even worse, we've been told that some young talents have been "advised" to take this terrible step by their handlers, parents, and show biz executives—precisely the adult people who should know better!

Sure, when a kid stops going to school, he suddenly has a lot of time on his hands, which he can devote to furthering his incipient show biz career. But, what happens to his mind and character in the process?

Adult handlers of young talents should realize that "performance" isn't something that you can pull out of a hat, or achieve out of context, in a convenient vacuum.

A young performer becomes outstanding *not* just because he's learned how to sing, dance and act well, but also because he's become an interesting, empathetic person. No workshop can teach you to do that, only learning and living can.

Since some (many?) of today's show biz starlets have been advised to stop studying, they could come across as shallow, hollow people. They go through the usual performance motions, say the right things, read the right spiels, but they're as interesting and involving to watch as puppets on a string— or, more accurately, as puppets whose strings have gotten unraveled, or snipped off altogether.

That's why there's no heart, no soul to many young starlets' performances these days: Their lack of schooling has made them shallow, silly—even stupid. And stupidity, no matter how appealingly it's packaged in a pretty face or hunky body, is no delight to watch.

So, young starlets, go back to school! Never mind if it takes you longer to make it in show biz. If you're good and ready, you'll make it, anyway.

And, with a good mind that can make your heart truly sensitive and creative, you'll stand a much better chance of staying in show biz for a long time, unlike the pretty, silly "flavors of the month" whose "popularity" doesn't even last a year because it has no real personality, temperament and character going for it.

What about the young talents who drop out of school but go in for home schooling? That's not so bad, but nothing can take the place of a school environment, where you learn not just from your teachers, but also from the other kids you interact with.

And "learning" here is taken in the best sense of the word: not just rote knowledge, but learning about life itself—which is precisely what genuine performers need to know!

Movies on TV

ON HBO, today at 10:45 a.m., "Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas." 7:05 p.m., "Raiders of the Lost Ark." 10:55 p.m., "Suspect." Jan. 21 at 5:05 p.m., "That Championship Season."

On Cinemax, today at 6:30 a.m., "Spartacus." 1 p.m., "And the Band Played On." 3:30 p.m., "Anzio." 1:50 a.m., "Around the World in 80 Days." Jan. 21 at 6:30 a.m., "The Fabulous Baker Boys." 10 a.m., "The Man Who Knew Too Much." 7 p.m., "Mary Shelley's Frankenstein."

On Cartoon Network

TODAY at 6 p.m., on Cartoon Network, "He-Man and The Masters of the Universe" screens an episode titled, "Sky War": Skeletor uses disinformation to instigate a war between Avion (homeland of Stratos) and Andreenos (homeland of Buzz-Off). As the two kingdoms prepare to do battle, Skeletor makes plans to steal the Andreenid's supply of ambrosia, a substance that will make him stronger than He-Man.

Miss Hawaiian Tropic Int'l.

THE SCHEDULE for the 2005 Miss Hawaiian Tropic International beauty pageant: Jan. 21, at Café Lupe, tickle your funny bone and be entertained by the talented candidates. Jan. 29, Tropical Drinks Night at Studio M.

Feb. 21, arrival of Cebu candidates. Feb. 22, First Splash press presentation at Café Lupe. Feb. 24, Aloha Days and Nights. Feb. 25, at Pearl of the Pacific Resort. Feb. 26, at Spa Boracay.

March 4, Big Melee: Bar Invasion at V Bar. March 6, Chana Moments. March 7, No Ka Oi. March 10, coronation night at NBC Tent.

What, the Fockers?

DOLLYWOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

AN OLD show business axiom says comedy is truth. Find therein a glimmer of recognition ("Hey, that happened to me!"), followed by relief that the unfolding situation is happening to someone else, onscreen.

For instance, being introduced to the parents of your intended spouse and finding out that your future father-in-law is a covert government agent with a knack for ferreting out the truth. Or, worse, after meeting the couple that produced the person you love, introducing them to your own flawed, idiosyncratic family.

"Meet the Parents," the runaway comedy hit of 2000 about a male nurse named Gaylord Focker and his waspy partner who is the daughter of a CIA agent, was a success, grossing more than $300 million worldwide.

Compelling reason

The key to the follow-up seemed to depend on finding out what sort of people would shackle down a child with the name Gaylord Focker. **Jay Roach**, the director of both films, is more specific, saying the issue was not so much who these Fockers would be, but how they would compare to the Byrneses of Oyster Bay.

Says Roach: "I think Greg Focker dreads the Byrneses meeting the Fockers because he knows that [the two families are] worlds apart, culturally and socially." It is this dread, and Greg's fantasy that Jack Byrnes will judge the Fockers, that drive the movie, the director points out.

Once the idea for the movie was formulated and a screenplay embarked upon, the thoughts turned to casting: Who would—and, more important, who could—play the Fockers?

Dream team

Offers producer **Jane Rosenthal**: **"Dustin Hoffman** and **Barbra Streisand** were our 'dream team.' That they were initially intrigued with the idea was beyond our wildest dreams."

In essence, Roach asked Hoffman to play himself.

"And over all these years, no one had ever asked me to do that," says Hoffman. "Bernie Focker is basically the kind of a guy who wouldn't mind leaving the door open while he went to the bathroom on an airplane just so he could continue a conversation with the people that he was talking to around his seat."

In casting Bernie's mate, the list was, once again, extremely short.

Recalls Roach: "We wanted someone who was a truth-speaker, very direct and uninhibited—also very open and affectionate. Barbra just brought an amazing complexity to the character."

Streisand hadn't acted in eight years (since "The Mirror Has Two Faces"), by choice.

"I felt I had settled into a relaxed way of living at this point in my life," she says. "But, Jay was very persuasive. It's always nice to be asked by a director who wants you, specifically, in a part. Ben called me from Europe and was very insistent that I should play his mother, so I resigned myself to getting up at five in the morning. It's turned out to be a good decision and a wonderful adventure."

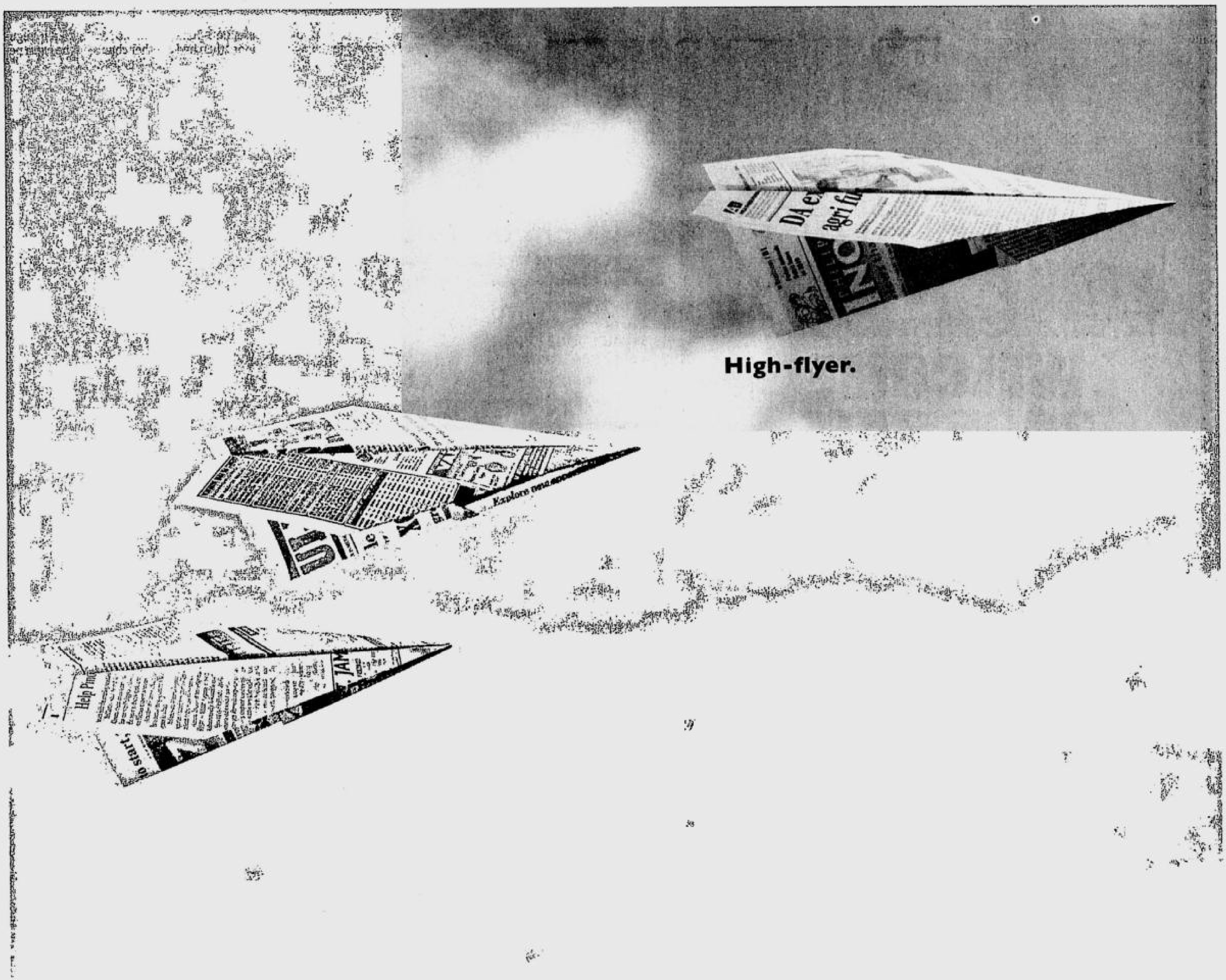
DRIVEN BY DREAD. Director Roach thinks the Greg Focker character dreads the Byrneses meeting the Fockers because he knows the two families are worlds apart

First time

Streisand and Hoffman have been friends for over 40 years but the new film is the first time they have worked together.

"We went to an acting school together, and Dustin was dating my roommate at the time," recalls Streisand. To pay for classes, she says, Hoffman worked as school janitor and she babysat for the teacher's kids. "Working with Dustin is really fun, because

WHAT/ A26



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THX 1 MEET THE FOCKERS	1 WHITE NOISE	1 OCEAN'S 12	5 KUNG FU HUSTLE	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 1 MEET THE FOCKERS 1:20, 3:50, 6:20, 8:50, 11:20	1 WHITE NOISE
2 OCEAN'S 12	2 MEET THE FOCKERS	2 WHITE NOISE	6 MEET THE FOCKERS	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 2 MEET THE FOCKERS 3:00, 5:30, 8:00, 10:30	2 KUNG FU HUSTLE
3 WHITE NOISE	3 BLADE: TRINITY	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 3 MEET THE FOCKERS 11:50, 2:20, 4:50, 9:50	7 MADHOUSE	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 OCEAN'S 12 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00, 11:30	3 NED KELLY
4 KUNG FU HUSTLE	4 KUNG FU HUSTLE	4 BLADE: TRINITY		GUARANTEED SEATS 4 KUNG FU HUSTLE 1:05, 3:10, 5:15, 7:20, 9:25, 11:30	4 OCEAN'S 12
5 MEET THE FOCKERS				GUARANTEED SEATS 5 WHITE NOISE 2:35, 4:45, 6:55, 9:05, 11:15	5

GB1 GREENBELT 1
1 WHITE NOISE 12:50, 3:00, 5:10, 7:20, 9:30
2 MEET THE FOCKERS 11:40, 2:10, 4:40, 7:10, 9:40

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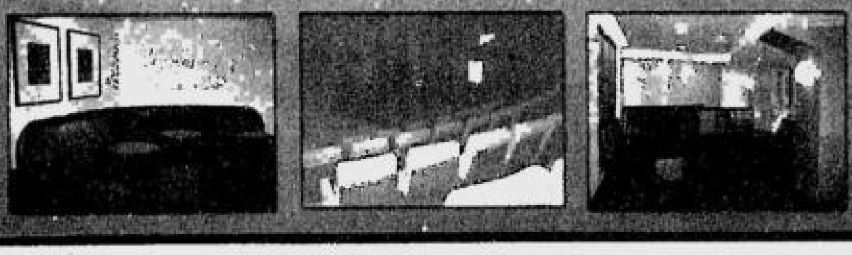

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DID YOU KNOW...

Tanya Garcia, star of GMA 7's newest fantaserye "Engkantada," was seen strolling at the Metrowalk, a new complex of shops and restaurants that's being completed in Pasig City, one recent Sunday night with her constant date, a businessman. Tanya, who looked very pretty in pink that night, and her date were walking while their arms were linked.

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Willie gets...

From page A28

on to meetings where he said he contributed to the overall concept of the show. He also promised himself that he would not be dropping cheeky remarks that might offend viewers and Laguardia.

"There's no room for me to be rude in this show," he said in Filipino. "It's a game show, and I'd be dealing with the masses who appreciate what I am because I came from their class. There would be no calendar girls, no sexy dancers, only the poorest of the poor who want a chance at becoming instant millionaires."

Very lucky guy

Willie also admitted that returning to ABS-CBN after he was axed from the network three times is an honor for him.

"It's the people who clamored for my return," he claimed. "If not for them, I wouldn't be back."

He said surveys showed that he had what it took to draw an audience and keep them glued to their TV sets. Ratings of the shows in which he guested last year in the rival network GMA-7, like "Extra Challenge," soared to an all-time high. But GMA-7 executive Wilma Galvante said the show is a consistent top-rater regardless of the guests.

"I have been really very lucky," admitted Willie. "When I was out of ABS-CBN, Bella Tan [president of Universal Records], took me in and gave me the album."

The album has since turned gold, according to Universal Records' Ramon Chuaying.

Will "Wowowee" turn gold for Willie, too?

Here's hoping that TV has seen the last of its bad boy.

What, the ...

From page A25

we both like to improvise—like musical riffs, instruments playing around the melody."

De Niro also enjoyed his return engagement as Jack Byrnes, obsessed with guaranteeing the family lineage—and digging into the Focker family closet for any chinks in the chain.

Rosenthal's opinion is that the Fockers and the Byrneses, as different as they are, have more in common than they realize.

"Basically, if you look at the Fockers, [you realize] there is such a thing as loving your child too much," says the producer.

"That said, however, it actually makes them very much like the Byrneses, who've always been a bit overprotective of their daughter."

For feedback, e-mail wateringhole-shangrila@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaithband.com.

‘Idol’ ratings ‘will dip’

LOS ANGELES—Ratings for Fox’s top-ranked “American Idol” will probably decline as the TV talent search show enters its fourth season this week, a network official said on Monday.

Gail Berman, head of Fox’s entertainment division, told a meeting of TV critics she expected ratings for the show to decline as a natural consequence of its age, even though its audience grew last year and 29 million people watched its finale.

“I certainly think that in the fourth iteration of a show, we can expect to see audience dispersion and some declines,” she said. “What surprised me last year, its third year, was that its audience grew. We certainly don’t expect to see that this year. But this show is a very important part of our schedule.”

She did not say how much she expected ratings to decline.

“Idol” is a major money-maker for the fourth-ranked network, a unit of News Corp. It returned in a slightly revised format yesterday with a two-hour program, followed by a one-hour episode today.

It was dominated last year by female vocalists. Program officials said the aim this year is to have equal male-female representation in the finals.

Berman said Fox would continue its experiment with year-round programming.

She admitted that the network had leaned too heavily on reality programming this TV season, including the disastrous “Who’s Your Daddy?”

Fox has been caught on the wrong side of audience taste in the past few months. Scripted series like ABC’s Golden Globe-winning “Desperate Housewives” and “Lost” are hot, while viewers seem to have little patience for new reality series.

There were others, but Fox’s problems were symbolized by “Who’s Your Daddy?,” the Jan. 3 show where an adopted daughter picked her birth father out of eight strangers and won a $100,000 prize. *Reuters, AP*

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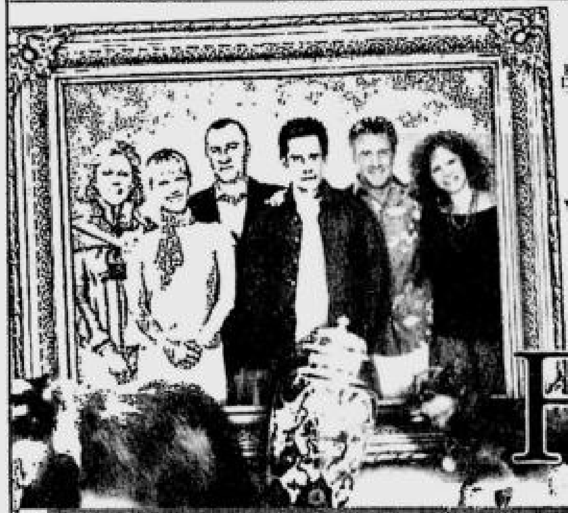

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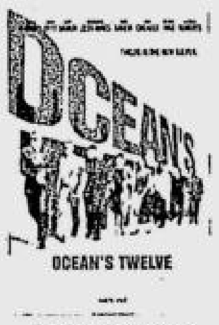

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1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 WHITE NOISE
3 KUNG FU HUSTLE
4 BLADE TRINITY
5 UNO
6 ENTENG KABISOTE

sm city marilao
1 KUNG FU HUSTLE
2 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
3 MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE
4 OCEAN'S TWELVE

sm city baguio
1 BLADE TRINITY
2 2046
3 ONE MISSED CALL
4 OCEAN'S TWELVE

sm city bacoor
1 UNO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 MADHOUSE
4 KUNG FU HUSTLE
5 BLADE TRINITY
6 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
7 OCEAN'S TWELVE
8 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

sm city batangas
1 HONEY
2 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
3 OCEAN'S TWELVE
4 HELLWOLF

sm city dasmariñas
1 KUNG FU HUSTLE
2 ONE MISSED CALL
3 OCEAN'S TWELVE
4 UNO

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8 KUNG FU HUSTLE

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3 HELLWOLF
4 HAROLD AND KUMAR
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6 BLADE TRINITY
7 RESERVED
8 SO HAPPY TOGETHER

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1 BLADE TRINITY
2 OCEAN'S TWELVE
3 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
4 NANGNAK
5 2046
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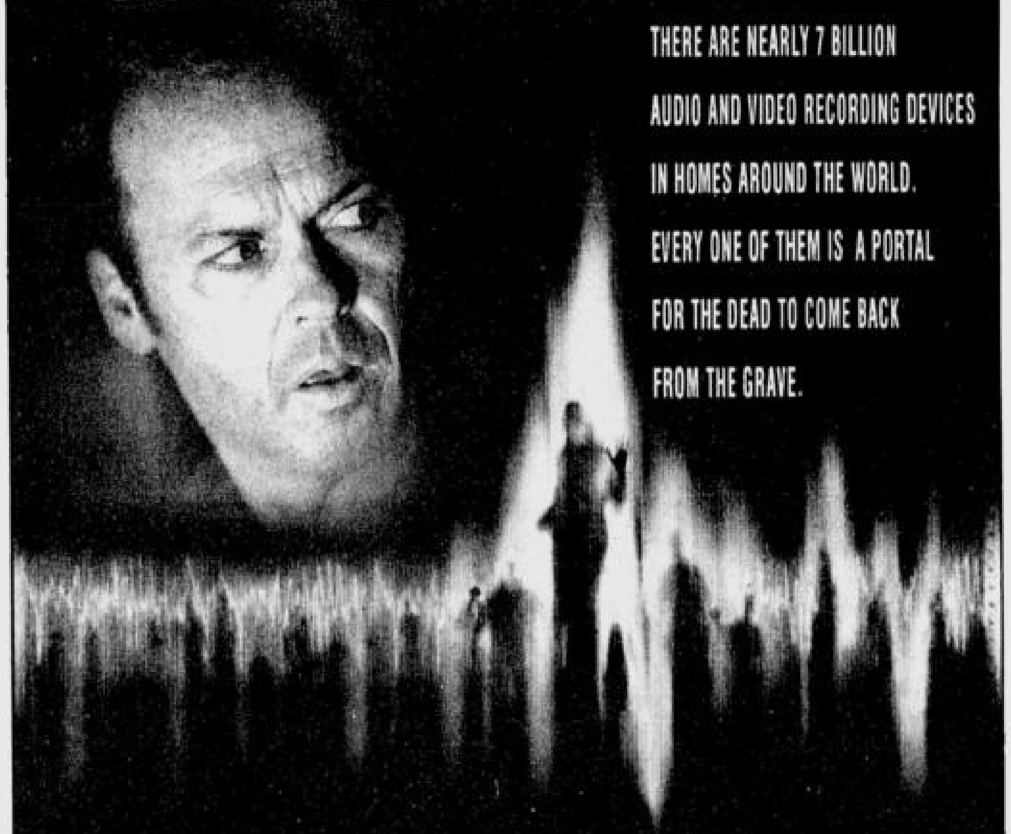

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MAN OF PROMISE. "There's no room for me to be rude in this new show," says TV's bad boy

Willie gets a last chance

By Nini Valera

"DEEP in my heart, I'm an 'Eat Bulaga' boy," confessed Willie Revillame.

But on Jan. 29, Willie would be hosting a game show on ABS-CBN in the same time slot as "Eat Bulaga" which, with 25 years of airtime, is the longest running noontime show on Philippine television.

"Let's face it, *pader ang* 'Eat Bulaga,' *at hindi ko kayang banggain ang pader* ('Eat Bulaga is an institution, and I'm not about to collide with it)," Willie acknowledged. "But my new show is not about ratings. It's about giving Filipinos a chance to achieve their wildest dreams.".

He described his show, "Wowowee," which will air weekdays from 1 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. as the ultimate game show that would give contestants the biggest sums of money at every turn.

> 'I'm just being myself. Being naughty is natural to the Pinoy. I am not being rude. My humor is off the streets. Some people who are not exposed to the streets are turned off by this'

Willie explained: "It's like 'Pera o Bayong,' but in a bigger way. Anybody is welcome to join the show—carpenters, garbage men, vendors—and take a chance at the P2-million grand prize we will be giving out daily. Even if they don't win the grand prize, they'll be going home with money."

To be aired back-to-back with Kris Aquino's "Pilipinas, Game Ka Na Ba?," the new show promises to be a money machine that's supposed to jumpstart hope in Filipinos and give them a new lease on life, according to Willie.

The show also gives Willie a new beginning as TV host after he was fired for the second time by ABS-CBN last year over an incident with his co-host Mahal on his then noontime show, "Magandang Tanghali Bayan."

Censors chief Maria Consoliza Laguardia took offense at Willie's vulgarity when he wished Mahal, who was then celebrating her birthday, to finally lose her virginity.

Willie also lost his public service show "Willingly Yours," also on ABS-CBN. For about a year, Willie was off the air, except for a stint as game show host in the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office-sponsored game show on Channel 5 and guesting appearances on ABS-CBN and the rival network GMA-7.

An album with Universal Records called "Pito-Pito" also kept Willie alive in show biz. The album's carrier single, "Pito-Pito," composed by Lito Camo, was even used by President Macapagal-Arroyo as her campaign jingle in the May 2004 elections.

'Kanto' boy humor

Everybody describes Willie as a nice guy, but why doesn't it show on TV?

"*Kanto* boy *ako* (I grew up on the streets)," Willie explained. "I'm just being myself. Being naughty is natural to the Pinoy. *Hindi na man ako nambabastos* (I am not being rude).

"My humor is off the streets. Some people who are not exposed to the streets are turned off by this. I can relate to the *masa* because I came from the *masa*. I understand their feelings and their pains because I know what it's like to be poor.

"So most people I deal with, especially game show contestants and co-hosts on TV, understand that I don't mean harm and I just want people to laugh."

Censors chief Laguardia might disagree with Willie's description of his sense of humor, which often boarders on the obscene if not outright bad taste. But executives at ABS-CBN are apparently willing to take a risk on Willie again.

But this would be the last time.

"When Arlene de Castro (Vice President Noli de Castro's wife) told me about ABS-CBN's plans to give me a show, she also warned me not to blow it since this would be the last chance they would give me," Willie confided.

So he vowed not to self-destruct and went

WILLIE/ A26

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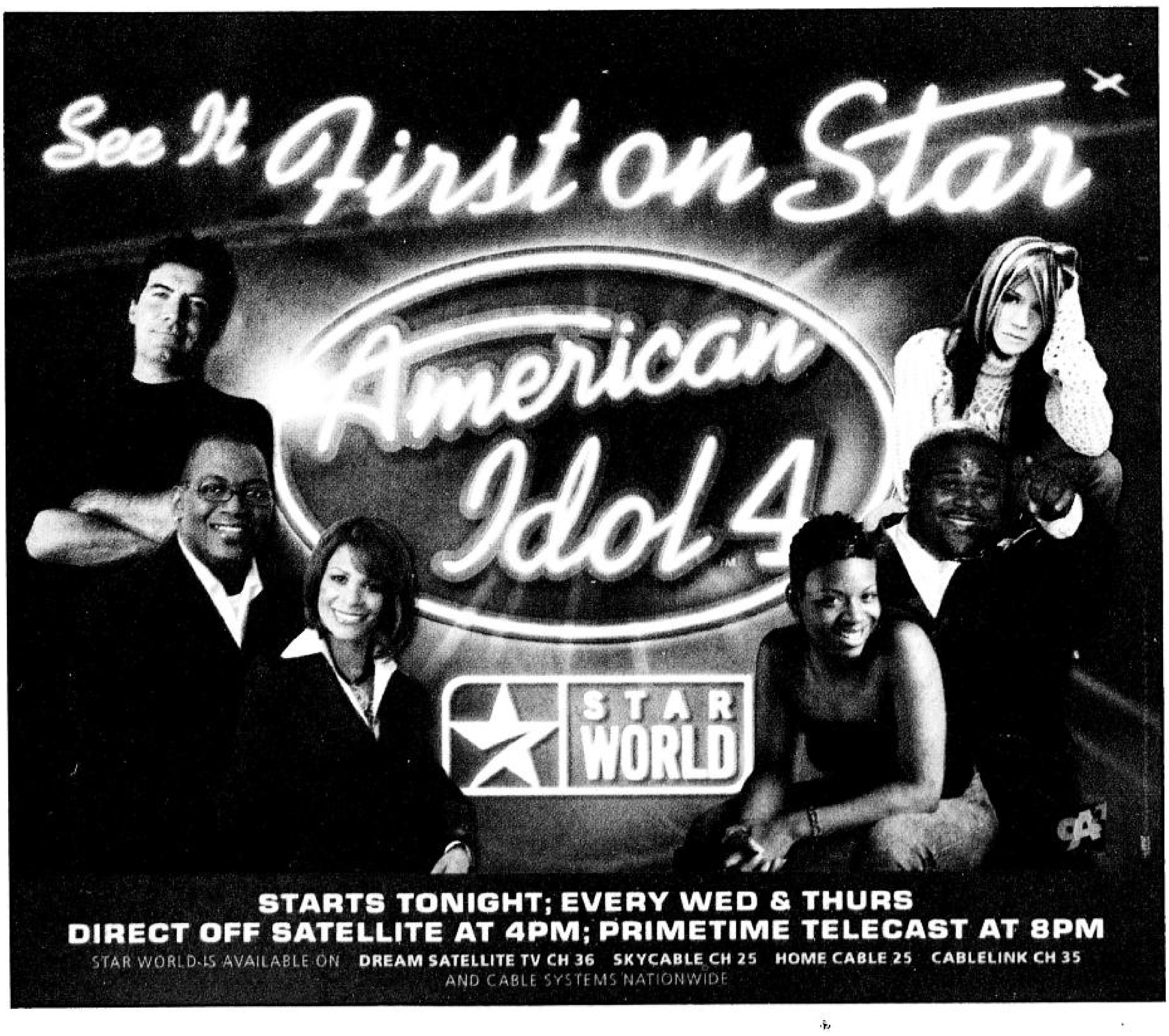
BEACH BODIES. The summer event has produced big names in modeling and show biz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Mossimo Bikini Summit in the city

THE COUNTDOWN to this summer's most spectacular event, the Mossimo Bikini Summit, has begun.

This year, the event moves to Manila for the first time since the competition started four years ago. But prior to the finals of the Mossimo Bikini Summit 2005, a series of events will take place on Boracay Island.

Previous products of the Mossimo Bikini Summit include 2002 runners-up Jordan Herrera and Douglas Robinson, and grand champion Carlo Maceda; 2003 grand champion Brent Javier, who is one of today's most in-demand names in modeling, and "TV Idol" finalist AJ Dee; and from last year's batch, print and commercial models Marco Grazzini, Aaron Bower, Thea Kriegl and DJ Myke of the all-boy group Akafellas.

Cast & Crew, the organizer and producer of the event, is again on the lookout for good-looking guys and girls who have the potential to become the next big names in the entertainment and modeling scene. If you are not more than 25 years old, of any nationality, at least 5-foot-10 (men) and 5-foot-4 (women), with the personality and the attitude to match, you could be it.

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'04 budget deficit stays below target

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL government's budget deficit for 2004 reached only P186.1 billion, or better than the official target, prompting the Department of Finance to predict that the medium-term goal of a zero deficit will be accelerated.

The P186.1-billion deficit for last year was P11.7 billion lower than the target of P197.8 billion.

According to Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong, the lower-than-programmed deficit last year already placed the government's fiscal consolidation plan a year ahead of schedule, or 2009 instead of 2010. She earlier said that should the Arroyo administration's proposed revenue-raising measures be passed by Congress, the goal of a balanced budget would be attained in 2008.

The 2004 deficit figure, which was equivalent to 3.9 percent of gross domestic product, was a result of the P698.3 billion in revenue collection as against the P884.4 billion worth of expenditure. The government overshot its P874-billion expenditure target, but the lower deficit was still made possible by the revenue collection that was higher than the target of P676.5 billion.

Of the P698.3 billion in revenue, P470 billion came from the Bureau of Internal Revenue, P122 billion from the Bureau of Customs, P7.3 billion from the Bureau of Treasury and other agencies, while the rest came from other non-tax revenue sources.

The positive fiscal data for 2004 were enough reason for Amatong to question the basis of the decision of international ratings firm Standard & Poor's to downgrade the Philippines' credit rating. She said the fact that the national government was staying on track to meet its fiscal goals proved that the country did not deserve the one-notch downgrade.

S&P on Monday downgraded the country's long-term foreign currency sovereign debt to BB- from BB, with a stable outlook.

"They (S&P) did not have enough information on the developments in the fiscal sector when they made their decision," Amatong said in a press briefing yesterday. She said that if S&P knew about the deficit data, then it could not have made the downgrade.

She said, however, that the government was still hoping the deficit data could help convince the credit rating firm to improve its outlook on the Philippines from stable to positive.

Amatong said the government's fiscal standing as of 2004 made it confident that the budget deficit for 2005 would again be lower than the official target. She

'04 BUDGET/ B2

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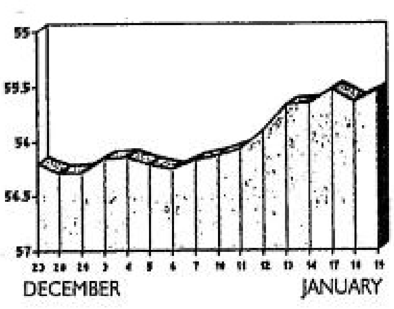

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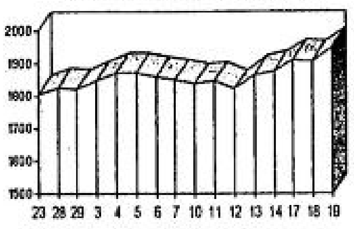
STOCK MARKET

Shares rise on favorable budget news

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B5)

SHARES closed at a new five-year high yesterday, boosted by news that the government posted a narrower-than-targeted budget deficit for 2004.

The 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index jumped 41.44 points, or 2.2 percent, to close at 1,946.89—its highest close since finishing at 1,976.74 on Feb. 14, 2000.

The main index closed 3.73 points lower on Tuesday, a day after Standard & Poor's downgraded the Philippines' credit ratings by a notch to BB- from BB due to what it viewed as inadequate fiscal reforms.

Traders said the negative sentiment stirred by the downgrade was overridden by the government's report yesterday that the budget deficit in 2004 stood at P186.1 billion—far lower than last year's target of P197.8 billion.

"The fiscal numbers are good and that helped improve investor sentiment. The numbers indicate the government is trying its best to get its act together," said Mark Alan Canizares, investment analyst at CitisecOnline.com.

Other sub-indexes also moved higher, led by the mining sector, which is expected to benefit from a Supreme Court ruling that lets foreigners get a bigger share—and even control—of local mining operations.

The broader All Shares Index climbed 15 points to 1,169.98 af-

SHARES/ B2

BSP seen to keep rates steady

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas may still keep its key interest rates steady in its next policy-setting meeting in February as inflationary pressures remained manageable.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura told reporters yesterday that the agency, despite pressures arising from the series of tightening by the US Federal Reserve, could still avoid following suit during the meeting of its Monetary Board next month.

"Our inclination is to still be accommodative," Buenaventura said, noting though that the BSP would watch out for possible pressures from recent calls for fresh wage increases.

During its policy-making meeting this month,

BSP/ B2

A3
B1
B2
C1
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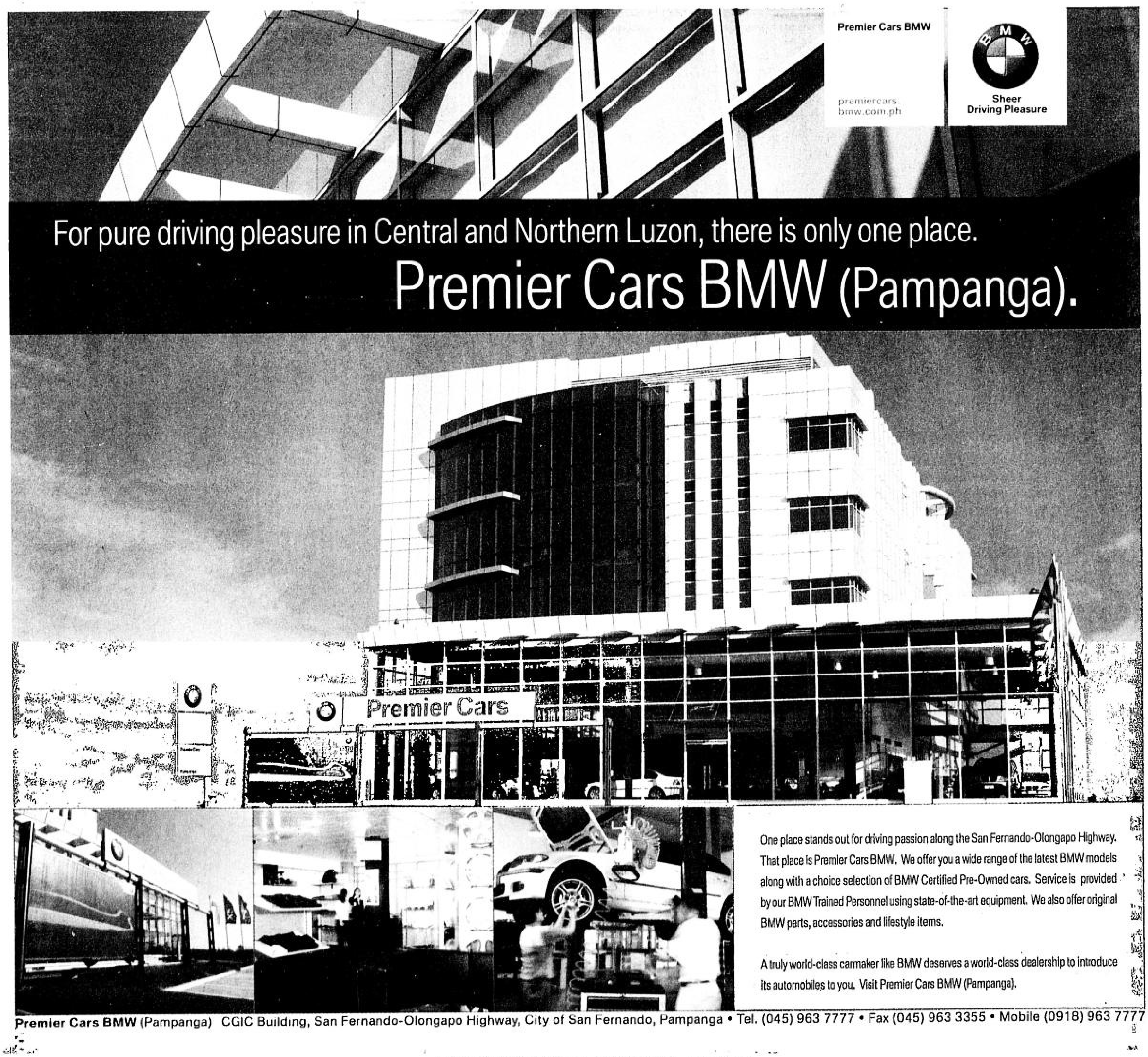
FILIPINO marine conservationist Allen Mondido displays specimens of the 10 species of seahorses found in the Philippines at the Project Seahorse operations camp in Bohol. Seahorse populations are threatened by the global traffic of this unique fish that serves the pet shop and traditional medicine industries.

AFP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GMA-7 exceeds sales target, earns ₱1.5-B net profit for '04

By Clarissa S. Batino

GMA Network Inc. has exceeded its revenue target of P7.5 billion and met its P1.5-billion profit target for 2004 due to higher airtime sales, its top officials said.

GMA president Felipe Gozon said the company's revenue topped the target by about 3 to 4 percent but higher production spending clipped some of the gains.

"I think we met the P1.5 billion although we exceeded the revenue target. I think our revenue is more than P7.6 billion. But the cost of producing the soaps like "Mulawin" raised the cost of our operations," Gozon said in an interview.

In 2003, GMA netted about P1 billion. It has since become the most profitable broadcast network in the country. The company is ready to sell as much as 30 percent of its outstanding shares to the public within the first half, most likely within the first quarter.

GMA said operating expenses went up due to increased production costs, advertising and promotion, amortization of program rights, and salaries and allowances.

Gozon said these costs were crucial in maintaining GMA's top rating.

GMA said it continued to top rival network ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. to lead in the ratings war in Mega Manila. As a result, the company continued to overtake its fierce competitor in terms of airtime sales.

The company is going to sell up to 30 percent of its shares to the public to raise as much as P9 billion for the broadcast firm and its major shareholders.

Gozon said that the company would raise its authorized capital from the current P1 billion to accommodate the sale of primary shares, the proceeds of which would go to finance its expansion and settle less than P500 million in outstanding debt.

Proceeds from a simultaneous secondary offering would go to the coffers of the Gozon, Duavit and Jimenez families who control GMA.

The owners, Gozon said, would like to broaden the ownership base of the network giant to strengthen its accountability to the public.

The company's estimated market value is between P27 billion and P30 billion, according to the GMA president.

He said all the numbers would only firm up after a series of roadshow slated in the next two months.

"Actually, we don't need the IPO proceeds because we have enough internally generated cash to settle our remaining debts and continue our expansion. But as a broadcast company engaged in public service, we need to broaden the ownership base," he noted.

Gozon said proceeds from the IPO would finance ongoing expansion programs like putting up a competitive UHF channel to match the rival firm's Studio 23, launching an overseas operations to bring GMA-7 shows to Filipinos abroad and strengthening its operations all over the country.

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Noting VAT's the truth

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

WE MUST be proud of our country. According to foreign money men who earn a living by watching countries like ours with mountains of foreign debt, this country is unique.

Actually, I asked those money men for their reaction to the recent good news about the downgrading of our credit rating.

The downgrading simply means that now we can be charged higher interest on our mountains of debt. This in turn makes our foreign creditors happy.

The foreign creditors only happen to be the biggest clients of the credit-rating agencies, which did the downgrading in the first place.

* * *

ANYWAY, other countries with mountains of debt share our misfortune—we suffer the pain of the downgrading all the same.

But that is where the similarity ends.

I am proud to say that foreign money men believe that we are actually different from those other countries in a big, big way: those countries did not know what to do to avoid the credit rating downgrade, while this country was not that stupid—we actually knew what to do.

After all, our leader under this cute administration claims that she once worked as a "professional economist."

It's just that we cannot seem to do what needs to be done. I tell you, my heart is swelling with pride already!

* * *

FOR the past six months, our leaders have been crowing about the downgrading. They told us that we had to make sacrifices, if we wanted to avoid it.

By "sacrifices," they actually meant that they must inflict upon us the only two unavoidable things in this world, namely, death and taxes. They want to tax us to death.

Everybody cheered at that time, and the credit rating agencies delayed the downgrading to wait for our leaders to make things happen.

In no time at all, our leaders were able to do nothing at all. Despite all the clear signals pointing to that recent downgrading, we still could not prevent it.

And so now, we must quickly apply make-up to hide the ugly international black-eye we got from the downgrading. Now we must pass new taxes. Uh-oh.

* * *

MORE taxes, therefore, can no longer be avoided. The government must raise at least P80 billion more in yearly revenue just to keep afloat.

That does not even solve the fiscal crisis, mind you. The money from new taxes is just meant to keep things from getting worse.

Still, even the guys in Congress know that they have no choice but to pass new tax measures. Everybody agrees on that.

It is in the kind of taxes in which they do not agree. Being politicians, of course, they will always go for the least controversial tax measures.

Those are always the taxes on specific sectors—you know, the taxes on "sin" such as smoking and drinking, and the taxes on "vice" such as using cell phones.

* * *

BUT still, the more serious thinkers among us are trying to help the lawmakers decide what can be the best tax measure for us today.

At one time, for instance, a group of UP economics professors came out with a paper which called for the strengthening of the VAT.

That is the value added tax, which was first implemented in this country about 16 years ago as a form of sales tax. It is, in other words, a tax on consumption.

It is a fair tax, according to the academicians, because it is a tax on the users. The more you buy things, the more you pay taxes. This, take note, is the plain truth in VAT.

And who do you think buy lots of things, plus lots of services, in this country where people actually still miss some meals? Hint: it is not the poor.

* * *

UNDER the proposal of the Department of Finance, this cute administration can raise about P55 billion just by changing certain things in the already existing VAT system.'

I mean, this country does not need to re-invent the wheel. The BIR, for instance, is already getting better at catching those who cheat on the VAT.

In just one year under Commissioner Willie Parayno, the BIR uncovered some P70 billion of "underdeclaration" (i.e. cheating), collecting P6 billion of it.

That's why Finance is pushing for changes in the VAT, such as lessening the exempted products and services, and raising the rate from 10 to 12 percent.

The government can earn, from the reduction alone, about P25 billion, while the rate increase can produce about P30 billion. That's just one tax measure, mind you!

* * *

FOR the beauty of the VAT is its broad coverage. Again, as I said, under the VAT, you pay the tax for anything you buy. Everybody always buys something, right? Everybody pays for the VAT, right?

And since people will keep on buying things all their lives, the VAT is a long-term solution. It stays in place forever.

Thus, we do not have to bother Congress every now and then for new tax measures, and so our lawmakers can concentrate on other pressing problems like their re-election.

Long-term solutions—something our creditors abroad are looking for—are not just quick fixes. And these certainly are not press statements from the Palace!

BSP seen to keep . . .

From page B1

the Monetary Board maintained its overnight borrowing or reverse repurchase rate at 6.75 percent and the overnight lending or repurchase rate at 9 percent, the same levels kept since July last year.

The BSP's stance is likewise supported by the peso's recent recovery to the 55:$1 levels after hovering past 56 to the dollar for a long time.

In a forum with the Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines, Buenaventura said that while the recent acceleration in inflation had been mostly supply side-driven, the BSP would remain cautious with its monetary policy while "retaining the flexibility to support economic growth."

"This is the usual balancing act that is the traditional mettle of a central bank," the BSP chief said.

"But preserving price stability is really a cooperative endeavor and the government has responded with measures to mitigate supply-side pressures through increased price monitoring of staple foodstuff, ensure supply of commodities through higher productivity in agriculture and industry and lessening dependence on imported fuel and energy prices," he added.

The BSP expects the inflation rate this year to trend down after the first quarter and reach 5 percent in the fourth quarter.

'04 budget deficit . . .

From page B1

said the DOF was expecting a P167.6-billion deficit compared with the target of P184.5 billion.

The country's finance chief also said that national government's positive fiscal performance in 2004 was likely to result in a consolidated public sector deficit (CPSD) that would be much better than programmed.

Amatong said that based on preliminary computations, the CPSD would probably hit only P245.6 billion in 2004 compared with the target of P315.9 billion. This would be equivalent to 5.1 percent of GDP, compared with the target of 6.7 percent.

The CPSD is the combined budget deficits of the national government, local government units, and state-owned companies.

Shares rise . . .

From page B1

ter declining 8.94 points Tuesday to 1154.98.

Gainers swamped decliners 82 to 13, with 45 stocks closing unchanged.

Volume ballooned to 3.45 billion shares valued at P1.55 billion, from Tuesday's 1.44 billion shares worth P1.46 billion.

Other gainers were Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. and Globe Telecom, the leading telecommunications firms, which are expected to post strong earnings this year due to the steady growth of their operations. **AP**

First Gen to raise $200M from IPO

By Abigail L. Ho

THE LOPEZ-OWNED First Generation Holdings Corp. is now in talks with prospective financial advisors to facilitate its initial public offering set to be conducted in the middle or in the second half of 2005.

Federico Lopez, First Gen president, yesterday said in a briefing that discussions were now ongoing with firms that had expressed interest in facilitating the IPO.

"We'll ask them to submit their formal proposals soon," Lopez said.

He said First Gen hoped to raise some $200 million to $250 million from the IPO, which would represent between 20 and 25 percent of the company's shares.

Proceeds of the flotation would be used to finance First Gen's future expansion requirements, Lopez said.

Aside from raising capital for further expansion, First Gen's decision to finally go public would also boost the local stock market as there had not been any big IPOs in the past several years, Lopez said.

"A lot of people are interested in this fundraising (activity), not just because it is from the Lopez group, but also because analysts hope that this will put the local market back on the radar screen of investors," he said.

The Philippine Stock Exchange has long been prodding big firms like Smart Communications Inc., GMA Network Inc., Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., Mirant Philippines Corp. and Manila Water Co. Inc. to go public.

The firms are required by law to float some of their shares in the local bourse. By going public, the firms may be able to restore investor interest in the stock market.

But none of the big firms have given any concrete updates as to when they would actually conduct their respective IPOs. Most of them cited the current poor market condition as their reason for shelving plans to go public.

In the case of First Gen, Lopez said the company was keen on pushing through with its IPO within this year.

"Our target is to do it this year, we just don't know yet exactly when," he said. "Maybe in the middle or the second half of the year."

Subic export receipts hit $712M in '04

INCREASED production of merchandise in Subic led to a 4-percent increase in export receipts to $712 million in 2004 from about $685 million the previous year.

Alfredo C. Antonio, administrator of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, said in a statement that exports from Subic continued to improve as a result of increased production of computers and other electronics products, as well as non-electronic products.

Antonio said Wistron Infocomm, a subsidiary of Acer Computers, remained Subic's top trader, exporting $474 million worth of laptop computers, motherboards and peripherals.

The Taiwanese company accounted for two-thirds of Subic's total export receipts recorded last year.

The second top exporter was electric machinery and appliances maker Sanyo Denki with $51 million in exports.

Top Mechatronics, a manufacturer of automated teller machine parts, ranked third with $43 million worth of products shipped out.

Japan-based wood processing firm Juken Sangyo (Philippines) and Nidec Philippines Inc.—maker of small precision motors—each posted $31 million in export sales.

Antonio also noted that non-electronic, value-added manufacturing businesses like those engaged in processed woods, high-end garments, jewelry and aircraft production also contributed to increased export levels.

The firms cited include Subic Bay Apparel Corp., DJ Aerospace, Illios Jewelers of Italy, Galante, Aurum Alliance Corp., Bay Lux International Inc., Filcam Industries Inc. and Riflessi D' Oro Corp.

This year's actual exports came short of SBMA's target of $1 billion by yearend. The agency earlier said it was confident it could attain the figure because of promising market trends.

SBMA officials are also expecting higher export values in the next few years with the completion of the $215-million Subic Container Port project. The facility would enable the freeport to cope with the fast-growing container cargo trade in the Asia-Pacific region.

Trade Secretary Cesar V. Purisima earlier said the country's exports would exceed the 2004 target of 7-8 percent as vital export industries performed "impressively" in November.

Merchandise export receipts in the first 11 months of 2004 went up 9.9 percent to $36.33 billion from a year ago. *Ronnel W. Domingo*

Canned goods seen to cost 7% more by next month

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE LOCAL prices of canned goods are expected to go up by as much as 7 percent starting next month due to rising cost of raw materials in the global market, the National Price Coordinating Council yesterday said.

Trade Assistant Secretary J. Norman R. Hocson, who presided over yesterday's NPCC meeting, said manufacturers had hinted that next month's price increases might be the first in a series of hikes.

However, the NPCC noted that prices of chicken and vegetables would go down as supplies were ample.

According to the Tin Can Manufacturers Association of the Philippines Inc., the cost of tin cans have gone up by 15 percent. But members of the group said they would raise prices by only 5 percent.

Henry Tañedo, president and chair of TCMAPI, said the increase meant an additional 16 centavos per tin can.

"This would mean an increase of 7 centavos (in the price of canned goods)," Tañedo said. "It is negligible."

Still, Hocson said the Department of Trade and Industry would hold a dialog with manufacturers to discuss the possibility of absorbing the increase in costs.

"Prices of canned goods need not go up ... since the projected adjustment in tin can prices is minimal," he said.

Tañedo said international prices of tin had reached $1,100 per ton, while prices of tin plates went up by $300 in 2004.

Late last year, the DTI reported that the price of tin cans increased from P2.10 to P3.30 per piece due to high price of imported tin plates, which went up from $480 a ton in 2002 to $1,000 a ton as of October 2004.

Tañedo said the country's tin plate requirements were sourced entirely overseas, specifically South Korea, China, United States and Australia.

"We had promised that we would hold back on any price increase in the last quarter of 2004 and we were able to do that," he said. "But this time, we (are forced to hike prices, but we) are absorbing two-thirds of the amount we should increase."

Tañedo said the price uptrend was due to decreasing supplies in the world market, partly due to increased demand in China and cutbacks in production.

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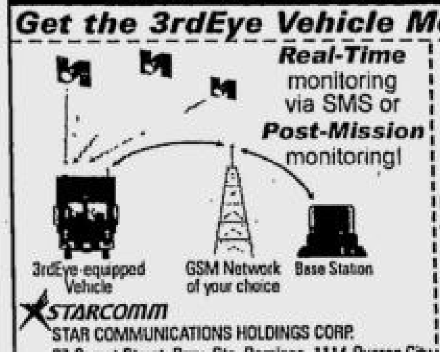

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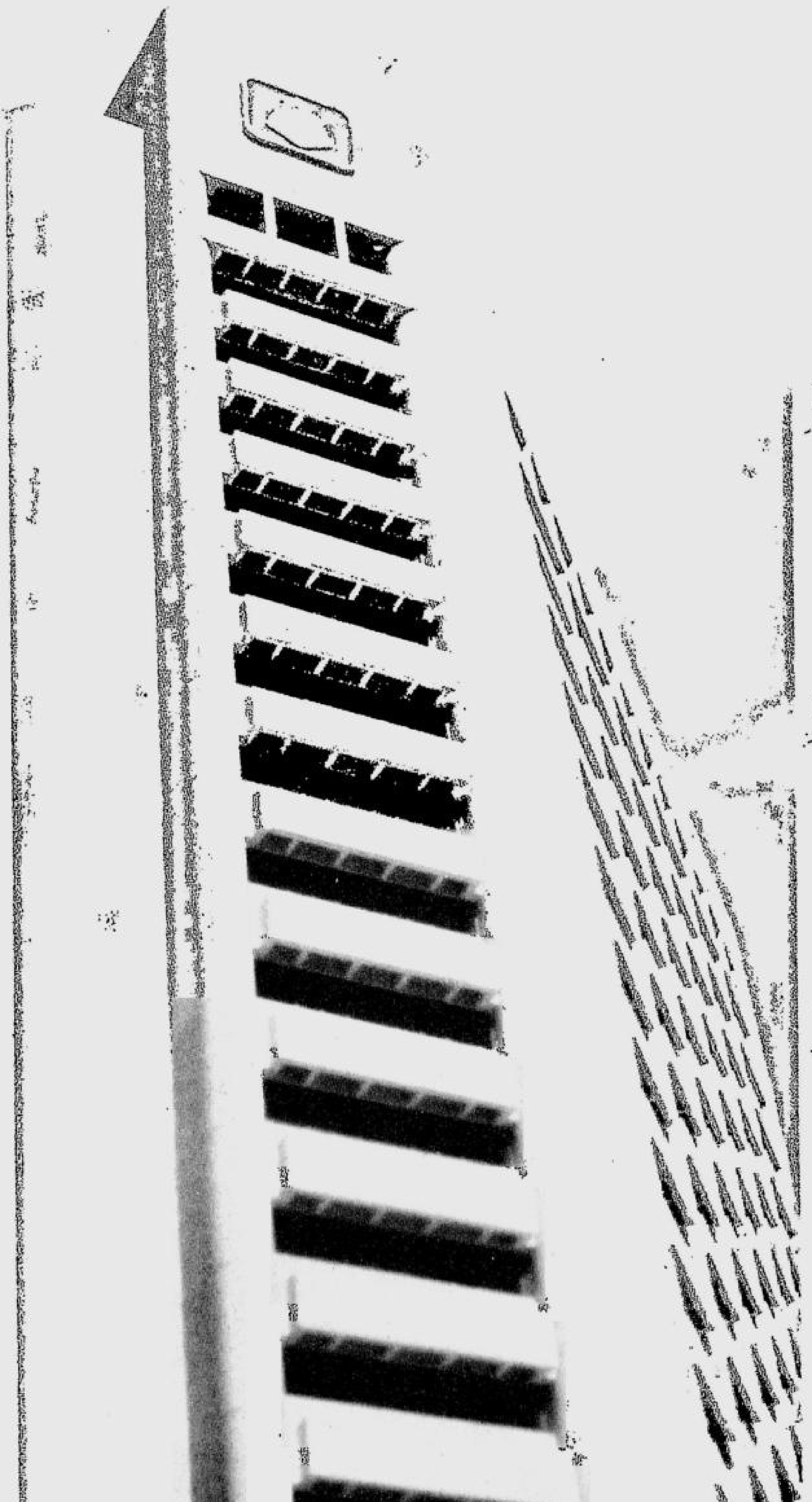

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Philippine Society for Training and Development

The **Philippine Society for Training and Development** is a non – stock, non – profit professional organization of Human Resource and Organization Development practitioners in the country. Organized in 1965 to serve the professional needs of the practitioners in the country, it has been in existence for almost 40 years now. Activities include the conduct of monthly learning sessions of current trends, technologies and practices in HROD professions, seminars and workshops for trainers, conferences, symposium, exposition of training technologies and networking. As of the end of 2004, it has 389 institutional and individual members including those from the business, industry, academic, government, and non – government organizations.

Vision

A dynamic society internationally recognized as the moving force in professionalizing HROD practitioners and a major contributor to the development of the nation's human capital.

Mission

To provide a vibrant forum where HROD professionals, institutions, and organizations can share relevant information benchmark best practices and network with each other towards uplifting industry HROD standards.

Objectives

PSTD is dedicated to the pursuit of the following objectives:

- To promote an understanding of human capital development and knowledge management as a strategic competitive advantage of management;
- To serve as a forum for the exchange and discussion of cutting-edge technology and business related to human resource management and knowledge management systems;
- To undertake studies and researches for the purpose of seeking more effective means of addressing local human resource management and information technology applications in people development;
- To foster closer relations and promote professional development among the practitioners of the human resource profession; and,
- To establish, maintain and develop contacts with local and international organizations in matters relative to people development.

PSTD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Officers and Board of Directors of the Philippine Society for Training and Development (PSTD) will be inducted during its monthly general membership meeting called "Tipanan". This will be held on January 20, 2005 at the 14th Floor, Executive Lounge of Meralco. The Inducting Officer and Keynote Speaker during the event is Congressman Ed Zialcita, as Past President of the Society.

The inductees are: Arthur Luis P. Florentin of Meralco as President; Chito San Mateo, Jr. of Phil. Daily Inquirer as Vice President; Maya Banez, a Training Consultant as Secretary; Rene Dadula of Manila Memorial Park Cemetery as Treasurer; Maribel F. Aglipay a Training Consultant as Auditor; and Chris Coloma of Security Bank as Public Relations Officer. The other members of the Board of Directors are: Penn De Los Santos of Viva Video City, Chairperson of the Fellowship Committee; Evelyn Lopez-Esparrago of De La Salle University, Chairperson of Membership Committee; Julius Chavez a Training Consultant, Chairperson of Professional Development; Gene Banta, Training Consultant, Chairperson of Programs Committee; Hernan Espiritu, Training Consultant, Chairperson of Research and Publications. As an Ex-Officio, Benny San Jose of PLDT is the Immediate Past President.

As part of the occasion, there will also be a formal turnover ceremony between the outgoing and incoming Board of Directors. There will also be a learning session on Six Sigma in Training by Anton Javier, Assistant Vice President of Fujitsu Ten Corporation of the Phils.

PSTD – ATTAIN SIGNS MOU

Recognizing the value of joining forces and mutually supporting each other in pursuing their common and convergent missions, the Philippine Society for Training and Development (PSTD) and the Association of Trainers in Tourism and Allied Industries (ATTAIN) have decided to forge a strategic partnership by signing a Memorandum of Understanding.

PSTD is committed to the mission of providing a vibrant forum where Human Resource and Organization Development professionals, institutions and organizations can share relevant information, benchmark best practices and network with each other towards uplifting industry HROD standards.

On the other hand, ATTAIN is committed to the mission of developing the capabilities and potentials of employees in hotel, restaurant and allied industries through quality knowledge, skills, attitudinal and technical training tools and processes.

The Memorandum of Understanding calls for the mutual recognition of each other's organization through acknowledgement of such status in their respective official functions and communication materials. It also calls for the joint pursuit of advocacies particularly with respect to human capital development.

2005 ARTDO INTERNATIONAL CONVERENCE HOSTED BY PSTD

The Philippine Society for Training and Development will be hosting this year's 2005 ARTDO International Conference on September 7 to 9, 2005 at the Manila Hotel.

ARTDO is an international umbrella body with membership comprising of national organizations, education and training institutes, multi-national corporations, public and private enterprises, and HR and management specialists from well over 30 countries worldwide.

ARTDO was formed when a core group of visionary leaders representing their respective organizations in 12 Asian countries met in Manila on 09 November 1974 for the First Asian Regional Training and Development Organization (ARTDO) Conference. A shared vision and call to action brought them together to promote human resource development – a pre-requisite to economic growth and progress through a unified approach.

This year's conference theme is "Unified Global HRD: Breaking Boundaries." Technological advancement is rapidly reshaping our business environment and pushing globalization to its limits. The resulting connectivity between and among producers, service providers and consumers has led to greater choices for all. This in turn heightens business competition, forcing companies to continuously sharpen their competitive edge through the development of their core competencies. Thus, the need for endless learning, unlearning and relearning experiences.

Fortunately, technological advancement has also contributed to improvements in the development and delivery of training services, which training and development professionals may explore and take advantage of. The convention as a whole will explore emerging trends in the training and development profession in the light of the influences of globalization and how training and development professionals across the world may connect and network with each other.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AT MML DEVELOPMENT CENTER

To ensure a productive year ahead of them, the incoming Board of Directors of the Philippine Society for Training and Development (PSTD) participated in a Strategic Planning workshop held at the Meralco Management and Leadership Development Center (MMLDC) last January 14 and 15, 2005.

As a result of its SWOT Analysis, the Board adopted as its theme for the year "Creating Capabilities to Transcend". PSTD, having experienced dormancy a few years back, has been revived, is now back on its feet, steadily growing and raring to soar. Thus, the incoming Board felt it appropriate to adopt such a theme.

Based on its current objectives, the Board will focus on the following Key Result Areas: Serving as a Forum for Training Professionals; Providing Professional Development; Advocating Human Capital Development; Conducting Studies and Researches; and, Maintaining Local, Regional and International Presence. To pursue this, the following strategies will be employed: Membership Involvement; Harnessing Technology; Building Relationships; Developing Organizational Capability and, Pursuing Ethical Standards.

Having invested significant time and effort in a strategic planning exercise, the incoming Directors are all optimistic and enthusiastic in pursuing their respective goals and targets. The year 2005 will be another productive year for PSTD.

Piltel sees P3-B profit in 2005

By Clarissa S. Batino

PILIPINO Telephone Corp. is looking at hitting a profit of more than P3 billion this year, on the back of sustained growth in wireless subscribers and reduced operating costs.

A ranking Piltel official said that Piltel's subscribers would continue to grow from the estimated 4.2 million last year, as it continues to invest in promotions and marketing programs.

Mobile phone operations bring in close to 90 percent of the income of Piltel, which is focused on the mass market for mobile phones.

The official added that Piltel expects to bring down operating costs this year as it could avail itself of about a billion pesos in tax breaks.

If Piltel hits its target, it will be the second straight year that Piltel will make a profit after years of languishing in the red.

Last year, Piltel booked P7-billion in net income during the first three quarters.

Of that amount, P3.7 billion is a one-time gain or an extraordinary income.

The official added that Piltel could also benefit from the weakness of the US dollar, although it may be hit by the improving yen.

A third of Piltel's debts, which are now owed to Smart, are dominated in Japanese yen and the rest in US dollars.

Piltel's improving finances prompted its chair, Manuel Pangilinan, to buy an additional 500,000 Piltel shares for P1.625 million or at P3.25 a piece.

Piltel shares closed at P3.40 yesterday, up 10 centavos.

He also bought 1,000 shares of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. that same day, bringing his stake in PLDT to 89,874 shares worth P126.28 million, based on yesterday's close of P1,405 each.

Changes in revenue arrangement forged between Piltel and Smart in December would allow Piltel to make full use of billions in pesos of tax breaks incurred from previous losses.

The board of directors of both Piltel and Smart approved the plan to increase Piltel's share in its revenue, from 50 percent to 80 percent.

Piltel used to give 50 percent of its revenue to Smart, as payment for its use of Smart's cellular infrastructure and facilities.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of January 19, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5	702,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	54.5	54.5	54	54.5	813,800
China Banking Corp.	570	570	570	570	420
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	48	50	48	50	76,300
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.42	0.43	0.42	0.43	1,930,000
International Exch. Bank	16.75	16.75	16.75	16.75	322,800
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	26	27	25.5	27	1,363,400
Philippine National Bank	23	23.25	22.75	22.75	10,000
Phil. Savings Bank	28.5	28.5	28.5	28.5	11,000
Security Bank Corp.	30.5	32.5	30	32.5	968,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	24.5	25.5	24.5	25.5	169,600
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	0.84	0.84	0.84	0.84	50,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	2450	2455	2450	2455	480
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.4	1.46	1.4	1.42	166,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	107	109	107	109	17,200
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1800	1800	1800	1800	2,200
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	18.25	18.5	18.25	18.5	55,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	2.02	2.02	1.96	1.98	16,035,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	930	940	920	930	127,170
Ipeople Inc.	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	321,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.048	0.049	0.048	0.048	3,800,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.034	0.035	0.034	0.035	2,000,000
Liberty Telecoms Holdings	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	180,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	83,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.4	3.5	3.35	3.45	19,908,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1395	1410	1395	1405	97,150
Ivantage Corp.	0.65	0.66	0.65	0.66	550,000
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	177,300,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	16.5	17	16.5	17	182,400
Manila Electric Co. B	26	27.5	26	27.5	1,671,500
Petron Corp.	3.4	3.45	3.4	3.4	4,070,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	170,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.44	1.44	1.44	1.44	150,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	18,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	1,342,000
Keppel Phils. Marine. Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	110,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1	1.02	1	1	190,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.38	0.39	0.38	0.38	1,580,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	2.9	3	2.75	2.95	6,320,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	50,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3	3.05	3	3	153,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	30	30	30	30	340,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5	518,200
RFM Corp.	0.69	0.69	0.68	0.68	290,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.32	170,000
San Miguel Corp. A	58	58.5	57.5	58.5	70,900
San Miguel Corp. B	78	78	77.5	78	72,800
Universal Robina Corp.	9.5	9.5	9.5	9.5	12,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	170,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Atok-Big Wedge Co., Inc.	9	9	9	9	3,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	111,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	5,000,000
Ayala Corp.	7.5	8	7.5	8	13,552,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.55	3.6	3.45	3.6	4,823,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	11	11	11	11	2,500
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.026	0.027	0.026	0.026	31,700,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2	2	1.94	1.94	1,406,000
APC Group Inc.	0.135	0.155	0.135	0.15	17,720,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.008	0.008	0.0075	0.0075	85,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	100,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	1.1	1.14	1.1	1.14	40,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	21.25	21.25	21.25	21.25	14,100
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.81	0.94	0.8	0.93	117,550,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.165	0.165	760,000
Crown Equities, Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	440,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	4.4	4.7	4.4	4.65	11,327,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.032	0.032	0.032	0.032	4,000,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.18	1.18	830,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	7.6	8.6	7.6	8.5	16,602,000
F&J Prince Holdings Corp.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	36	37	35.5	37	1,817,800
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	620,000
Global Equities Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	600,000
House of Investments Inc.	0.82	0.84	0.82	0.84	3,910,000
Ionics Inc.	1.66	1.68	1.6	1.6	656,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.05	3.3	3.05	3.25	1,735,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.5	2.7	2.5	2.7	5,362,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.32	1.36	1.32	1.36	9,121,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	140,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.47	0.49	0.46	0.49	84,560,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	16,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	200,000
Solid Group, Inc.	0.42	0.46	0.42	0.46	2,400,000
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	3.5	3.85	3.5	3.8	185,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.145	0.145	0.14	0.14	1,650,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.17	0.18	0.17	0.18	250,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.21	0.215	0.21	0.215	1,220,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Metro Alliance Holdings	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	10,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.64	1.66	1.6	1.66	525,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.065	3,400,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.13	0.13	0.125	0.125	800,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.64	0.65	0.63	0.63	4,610,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	1.14	1.2	1.14	1.16	6,508,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	10,000
Manila Jockey Club	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.4	27,000
Philippine Racing Club	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	3,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp.(Pdr)	18.5	18.5	18.5	18.5	491,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	7.7	8	7.7	7.9	3,010,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.57	0.6	0.57	0.6	650,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.34	0.34	0.33	0.33	14,750,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. A	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	50,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.15	0.15	0.145	0.15	2,160,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.39	0.42	0.39	0.4	70,000,000
Filinvest Land, Inc.	1.38	1.42	1.32	1.34	12,866,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.1	0.105	0.1	0.105	2,000,000
Gotesco Land Inc.B	0.08	0.11	0.08	0.11	900,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.185	0.2	0.185	0.2	3,740,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	710,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.085	0.09	0.085	0.09	800,000
Primex Corp.	2.85	,2.85	2.85	2.85	50,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.44	2.5	2.44	2.48	126,000
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.21	0.21	0.2	0.21	900,000
SM Development Corp.	1.4	1.44	1.38	1.44	1,476,000
SM Prime Holdings, Inc.	8.6	8.8	8.6	8.7	10,433,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.47	0.55	0.47	0.55	1,060,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc.B	0.5	0.55	0.5	0.55	510,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.013	0.014	0.013	0.014	79,400,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	4.4	4.7	4.4	4.7	1,300,000
Benguet Corp. A	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.3	26,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	30,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.46	0.48	0.46	0.48	75,130,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.5	0.53	0.5	0.53	73,310,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.02	0.021	0.02	0.021	924,500,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.026	0.028	0.026	0.028	621,600,000
Omico Corp.	0.0055	0.006	0.0055	0.0055	406,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.98	1.04	0.98	1.02	10,190,000
Philex Mining Corp B	1.04	1.16	1.04	1.12	20,820,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.21	0.23	0.21	0.23	2,600,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	1,800,000
Interport Res.	0.004	0.0044	0.004	0.0044	76,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.004	0.0048	0.004	0.0046	117,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.006	0.006	0.0055	0.0055	15,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	57,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	400,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	200,000
Pacifica	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.011	3,600,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	2.46	2.5	2.46	2.5	100,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.0775	0.0825	0.075	0.08	43,200,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.245	0.26	0.245	0.26	670,000

DISCLOSURES

EQUITABLE PCI Bank Inc. set the record date for attendance and participation at its July 19 annual stockholders' meeting to March 1.

* * *

PHILIPPINES Savings Bank confirmed that in its statement of condition, its reported return on equity as of December stood at 12.94 percent, improving from 10.25 percent in September.

* * *

MANUEL Pangilinan, chair of Pilipino Telephone Corp., bought 500,000 shares at P1.625 million.

* * *

CHRISTOPHER Rey Fernandez was appointed corporate secretary of UEM Development Phils. Inc. *Compiled by D.J. Yap, PDI Research*

CURRENCIES

January 19, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.767519	1.000000	55.6360
Japan	Yen	0.007506	0.009779	0.5441
United Kingdom	Pound	1.433034	1.867100	103.8780
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.098419	0.128230	7.1342
Switzerland	Franc	0.647531	0.843668	46.9383
Canada	Dollar	0.627212	0.817194	45.4654
Singapore	Dollar	0.469287	0.611434	34.0177
Australia	Dollar	0.582027	0.758323	42.1901
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.035912	2.652590	147.5795
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.204667	0.266660	14.8359
Brunei	Dollar	0.467856	0.609570	33.9140
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000084	0.000109	0.0061
Thailand	Baht	0.019941	0.025981	1.4455
UAE	Dirham	0.208996	0.272301	15.1497
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.302900	72.4881
Argentina	Peso	0.261506	0.340716	18.9561
Brazil	Real	0.282643	0.368256	20.4883
Denmark	Kroner	0.134358	0.175055	9.7394
India	Rupee	0.017588	0.022915	1.2749
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.202008	0.263193	14.6430
Mexico	New Peso	0.068260	0.088944	4.9485
New Zealand	Dollar	0.535977	0.698324	38.8520
Norway	Kroner	0.122556	0.159678	8.8838
South Africa	Rand	0.127281	0.165835	9.2264
Korea	Won	0.000741	0.000965	0.0537
Sweden	Kroner	0.110605	0.144186	8.0219
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024076	0.031368	1.7452

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Deposit Amount (in pesos)	Interest Rates (%) 30 days	60 days	90 days	1 year
100,000 - 499,999	5.500	6.250	6.500	7.000
500,000 - 999,999	6.250	7.000	7.250	7.500
1.0MM - 4,999,999	6.875	7.250	7.500	7.750
5.0MM - 9,999,999	7.000	7.500	7.750	8.000
10 million and up	7.250	8.000	8.000	8.250

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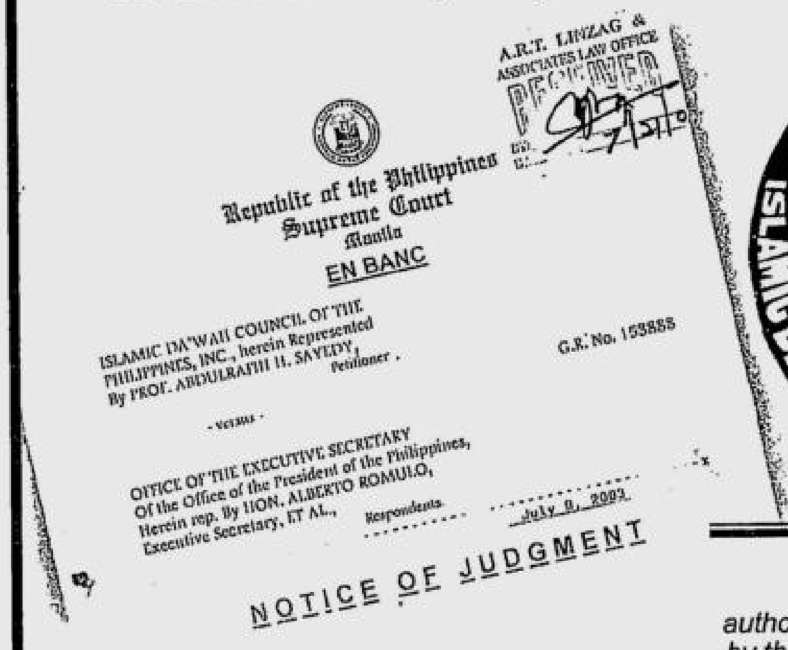

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Republic of the Philippines
Supreme Court
Manila
EN BANC

ISLAMIC DA'WAH COUNCIL OF THE PHILIPPINES, INC., herein Represented By PROF. ABDULRAFIH H. SAYEDY, Petitioner.

G.R. No. 153888

- versus -

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY Of the Office of the President of the Philippines, Herein rep. By HON. ALBERTO ROMULO, Executive Secretary, ET AL., Respondents.

July 9, 2003

NOTICE OF JUDGMENT

HALAL
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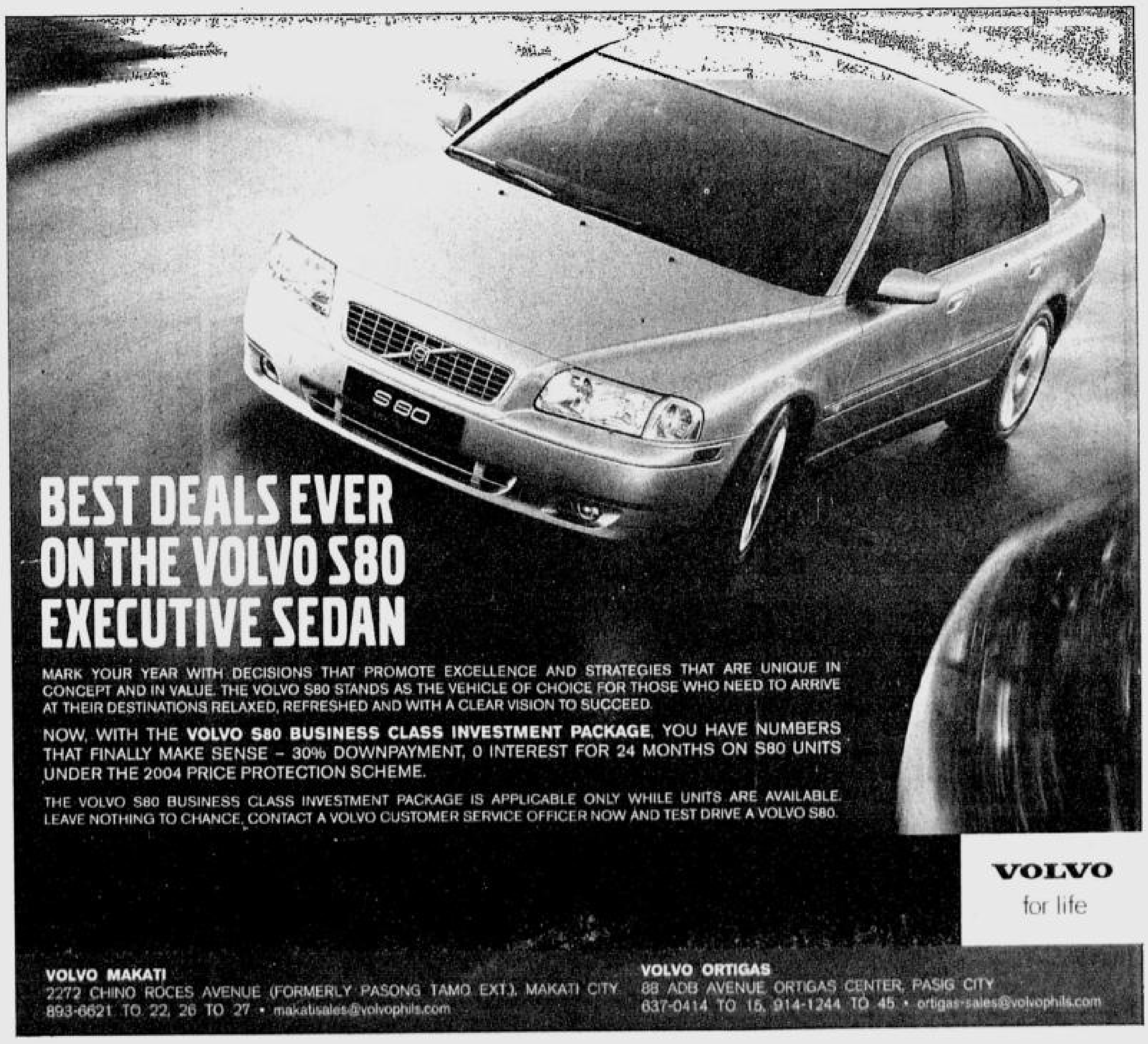

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A Gathering Of Doers. A Meeting Of Builders.

On January 20-22, 2005, Filipinos from the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, the Middle East and countries in Asia, as well as from Manila and the provinces, will converge in the Province of Cebu at the Waterfront Cebu City Hotel & Casino for the 3rd Global Filipino Networking Convention.

Like the first convention held in San Francisco in late 2002 and the second, staged in Manila in December 2003 (sponsored by the Department of Tourism), the objective of the 3rd Global is to enable Overseas Filipinos, through networking, to help each other and to help the Philippines. The theme of the convention is "Pinoy Power Worldwide." The sub-theme is "A Gathering of Heroes."

Overseas Filipinos or Global Filipinos, in the 3rd Global's point-of-view, are composed of immigrants, second-or-third generation foreign nationals of Filipino ancestry, Overseas Filipino Workers, and their guests. For many Global Filipinos, a trip to the Philippines for the 3rd Global symbolizes a "paying forward" or "giving back" mission that emphasizes a sharing of experiences without the "holier than thou" attitude. A vacation, a reunion, or a medical mission with a planned side-trip to Cebu are some of the primary reasons for attending the convention. Another motivator is their genuine desire to engage in discussions and conversations with other Overseas Filipinos and Philippine-based Filipinos as a foundation in gaining first-hand knowledge and insights so they can assist each other in shared causes and programs or projects.

Loida Nicolas-Lewis
Chair Executive Committee
3rd Global Filipino Networking Convention; National Federation of Filipino-American Associations

The Philippine-based delegates who will be networking with these Overseas Filipinos will be posing some challenging questions among themselves. "What have we done for the country lately?" or "We're grateful for these Global Filipinos' support since they believe that the Philippines is a land of opportunity, full of hope and promise. But we are the movers and shakers of the Philippines. Why don't we show our visitors what we are doing as a community of doers and builders?"

One of the highlights of the 3rd Global is the unveiling ceremony of a special exhibit at the convention, "The Gallery of Heroes," on January 21. The exhibit will give due recognition to Filipinos around the world who have brought honor to the Philippines or have been of exemplary service to the Philippines and its people. The Junior Chamber International-Philippines and TOYM Foundation will also co-sponsor the 3rd Global's "TOYM Gallery of Heroes" and the Youth Leadership Forum on January 22.

Simultaneously, the Entreprenoy Expo, a travel and trade exhibit organized and managed by L.A. Ducut & Company, Inc. for the 3rd Global, will be held from January 19 to January 23. Entreprenoy Expo allows the delegates and the general public to sample the products and services of local and Overseas Filipinos. This "Showcase of Unique Pinoy Entrepreneurial Spirit Here & Abroad" promises something for everyone's interests and buying power --- from domestic travel destinations and events, real estate, bU.S.iness opportunities, manufacturing to consumer goods. The venue is the high-traffic, high-visibility Cebu Trade Hall, third floor at SM City Cebu from January 19 in the afternoon through January 23.

Some of the invited guests and speakers from the Philippines include President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, Vice-President Noli de Castro, Senate President Franklin Drilon, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs Alberto Romulo, Secretary of the Department of Tourism Joseph "Ace" Durano, Senator Manny Villar, Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala, and Manny Pangilinan. The local public officials, led by Cebu Governor Gwen Garcia and Cebu City Mayor Tommy Osmeña, will officially welcome the delegates to the 3rd Global Filipino Networking Convention at the Welcome Reception on January 20.

The "shopping cart" format of the 3rd Global's break-out sessions allows the delegates to plan their participation effectively. For instance, the January 21 afternoon schedule offers forums and panel discussions that range from "Brain Drain to Brain Gain," "The Saga of the Overseas Filipino: The Filipino Diaspora, Immigration, Plight of the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), European Opportunities, Employment Opportunities" to "Filipino World War II Veterans: The 2nd Death March, Status of Veterans Equity Legislation, and panel discussions on how best to gain equity."

Some of the January 22 sessions include: "Trade, Investments, and Entrepreneurship," "Medical Mission & Health Care Conference," "Global Filipino Media," "Filipino History, Culture, & Arts," a forum on "OFWs: Teachers, Nurses, Therapists, Laborers, Overseas Performing Artists, and Others – Risks & Opportunities," "Philippine Studies in the U.S. & Foreign Schools," "Educational Exchange between U.S. & Philippine Schools," and "Absentee Voting & Dual Citizenship."

Pinoy Power
WORLDWIDE
The 3rd Global Filipino
Networking Convention

During the convention, there will be special "sub-conventions" and gatherings such as The National Association of Independent Travel Agencies (NAITAS) Conference, JAYCEES/TOYM Youth Leadership Forum, Real Estate Forum, the Hawaii Trade Mission, and the San Francisco Police Department-Philippine Exchange Training Consortium's community policing forum and workshops. Other activities such as sports tournaments and convention-organized tours will be confirmed before the convention commences on January 20.

At the Closing Plenary Session, the forums' and mini-conventions' resolutions will be presented and the formation of the "Global Confederation of Filipino Associations," which was conceptualized during the 2nd Global in Manila, will be organized.

The January 22 Closing Reception celebrates "The Filipinos in the Diaspora" with a special presentation and Philippine launching of "2006: 100 Years of Filipinos in Hawaii" by the Hawaiian delegates. A formal turnover of the Global Filipino Networking Convention --- the 3rd Global to the 4th Global --- symbolizes the continuity of "Pinoy Power Worldwide!" when it convenes sometime in late September or early October 2006 in Honolulu, Hawaii. The Hawaii state-mandated Philippine Centennial Celebration Commission, chaired by Elias Beniga, will oversee the joint activities of the NaFFAA 7th Empowerment Conference and the 4th Global Filipino Networking Convention.

The 3rd Global is a project of the National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA), the leading Filipino umbrella organization in the U.S.A., with headquarters in Washington D.C. and twelve (12) regional chapters across America. Loida Nicolas-Lewis, CEO of TLC Beatrice and one of the most respected women entrepreneurs in the U.S., leads the 3rd Global's Executive Committee together with Alex Esclamado and Rodel Rodis, who serve as vice-chairs. The 2005 Organizing Committee's Chair is Greg Macabenta, who owns and manages an advertising agency in the U.S., publishes and edits a Fil-Am newspaper, and writes a column for Business World, the leading business daily in Manila. The 3rd Global's co-convenor is the Cebu Visitors & Convention Bureau (CVCB) led by Founding Chair Patrick Gregorio who is also the President of Waterfront Hotels and Secretary General of the 2005 Organizing Committee. The other members of the 2005 Organizing Committee include: Marivic Bamba as vice-chair, Lorna Lardizabal Dietz as Executive Coordinator, Jenny Franco as Project Director, Officer Joe Robles of the San Francisco Police Department, Armando "Doy" Heredia, and Jon Melegrito. CVCB and DDB Philippines share marketing responsibilities in the 3rd Global's national sponsorship offerings.

MAnuel V. Pangilinan
Chairman
Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company
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Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala
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Ayala Corporation

For delegates who are planning their trip to Cebu for the 3rd Global, the general schedule provides opportunities to devote dedicated time to networking and sampling Cebu and its neighboring islands' dynamic and visitor-friendly attractions.

January 19 – all day delegates' arrival; Cebu tours, hometown & alumni reunions, pre-event meetings

January 20 – registration; film screenings; any convention-sponsored site tours; organized tournaments; 3:00 p.m. Entreprenoy travel & trade exhibit opening; opening reception starts at 6:00 p.m.

January 21 – formal opening at 8:30 a.m.; various forums & conferences; luncheon; 6:30 p.m. evening reception

January 22 – forums & conferences continue at 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; luncheon; 6:00 p.m. closing reception

January 23 – religious services; tours and any convention-sponsored site tours; departures; post-event speaking engagements.

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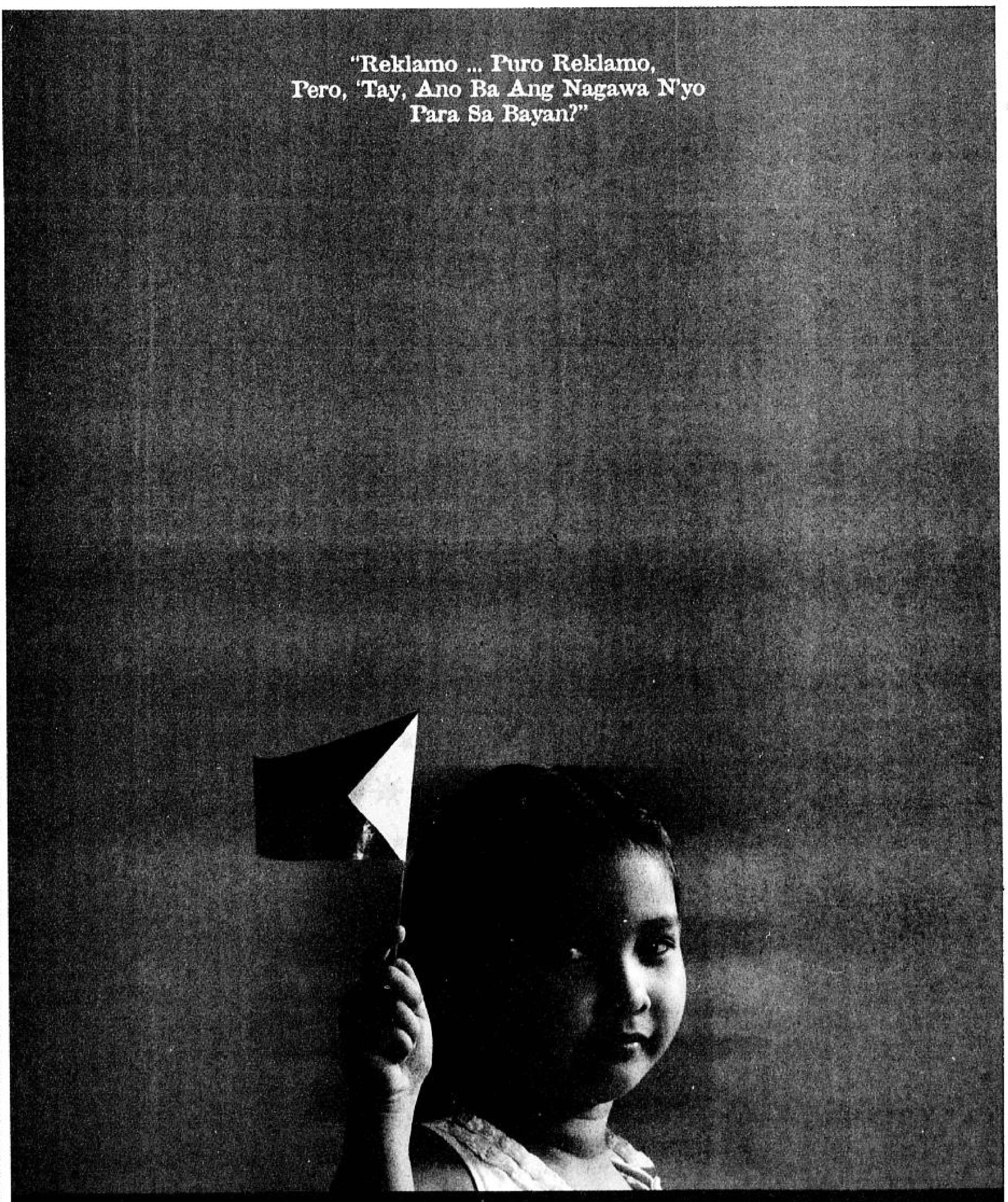
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US Fed to focus on economic data as rates rise

CHICAGO—The Federal Reserve will keep lifting US interest rates to less stimulative levels but will focus increasingly on economic data as they make their decisions, a raft of Fed officials suggested on Tuesday.

In separate appearances, Minneapolis Fed president Gary Stern, Philadelphia Fed president Anthony Santomero and Fed Governor Susan Bies said interest rates still had room to rise but should do so at a gradual pace.

Sandra Pianalto, president of the Cleveland Fed, weighed in with a more hawkish view on prices.

While some officials sounded more worried about inflation than others, the broad message was clear: a Fed campaign of "measured" increases in the benchmark federal funds rate will persist until rates neither spur nor curb economic growth.

Bies, in Baltimore, said with inflation expected to moderate and the economy strong, the Fed should "continue our pace of making measured advances at each of the meetings."

Pianalto warned that the central bank cannot underestimate the possibility of inflation creeping in, and pushing up rates sooner rather than later is better than "finding out the hard way."

"It is prudent to move the federal funds rate up to a position that gives me more confidence that monetary policy is no longer accommodative," she told a corporate meeting in Pittsburgh.

While Bies said she thought US businesses and consumers could withstand higher rates, she said the central bank should focus more on economic data as borrowing costs climb so it can tell when rates hit a sustainable long-run level.

"We've got to really watch incoming data ... because we know at some point we're going to get closer to the long-run sustainable interest rate," she added.

Fed speakers are out in force this week ahead of the FOMC policy meeting on Feb. 1-2, many offering their traditional economic outlook speeches for the new year.

Minutes from December's meeting, released Jan. 4, said "some" members thought the long period of low interest rates was creating "potentially excessive risk-taking in financial markets."

Those blunt words had some concerned the Fed might accelerate its monetary tightening.

Santomero and Stern, but not Pianalto, are voting members of the Federal Open Market Committee in 2005.

Bond dealers are trying to assess whether the hawkish view is widely held on the FOMC or confined to a few members such as Atlanta Fed president Jack Guynn and, based on Tuesday's comments, Pianalto.

However, Stern said in Minneapolis he was "not fully persuaded" excessive risk-taking is occurring.

Santomero did not rule out the potential for a more aggressive rate policy but echoed Bies' point that the pace of rate changes should be data-driven.

Some believe the FOMC will shift to this language at its next meeting from its current formulation that projects "measured" policy increases.

"If signs of price pressure emerge on a consistent basis we will need to consider quickening the pace," Santomero said in a speech to the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce.

For her part, Bies said she was not "overly concerned" that inflation trends meant the Fed needed to speed up rate rises.

The central bank raised rates five times last year and looks set for further increases in 2005.

"The Fed is going to keep raising rates and still runs the risk of speeding up their rate hike efforts if the inflation news is bad," said Steve Gallagher, US chief economist at SG Corporate & Investment Banking in New York.

Santomero and Stern suggested Fed policy could most likely stay on the track it has been on since June, when the fed funds rate was at a four-decade low of one percent and the FOMC started lifting rates by 25 percentage points at each meeting.

"If the economy evolves as I expect over the next year or so—with continued output growth, steady increases in employment and reasonably low inflation—then I expect we will continue to move the federal funds rate toward neutrality at a measured pace," Santomero said.

Stern termed the US economy "fundamentally sound, fundamentally resilient," and said rates are "clearly not at a restrictive level." *Reuters*

First Pacific vows prudence as it shops for new assets

PANGILINAN

HONG KONG—After five sometimes-turbulent years marked by asset sales and management battles, conglomerate First Pacific Co. Ltd. is positioned again to make acquisitions.

Managing director Manuel Pangilinan, armed with about $200 million in cash after a debt sale last week, vows to be prudent as the Southeast Asia-focused firm shops for assets in the food, telecoms and infrastructure sectors.

"Having learned the lessons of the Asian crisis of '97, we should move deliberately," Pangilinan said in an interview at the firm's Hong Kong headquarters. "You have to control the urge. There's enough experience. There's enough pain ... We'll be cautious." Pangilinan, a 58-year-old Philippines-born bachelor who enjoys skiing and collects art, said First Pacific is eyeing a handful of potential deals.

Possible markets for acquisitions in the food business include China, Thailand and Vietnam, while in the telecoms sector First Pacific is eyeing South and Southeast Asia.

"Telco assets—the good ones anyway—are probably few and far between," said Pangilinan.

First Pacific would consider lifting its 24-percent stake in Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), he said, although he refused to be drawn on the conditions for such a move.

The group is also considering investments in toll roads and power generation and distribution, Pangilinan said, and has taken a "very initial look" at Transco, the national power grid that the Philippines is privatizing.

Dividend hopes

Once a member of Hong Kong's blue-chip Hang Seng Index, First Pacific slimmed down after it was battered by currency losses, debt and regional economic turmoil.

For 2001, the company wrote down $1.7 billion in assets, wiping out its earnings for the previous 14 years.

With PLDT, one of its two core holdings, showing improved performance, First Pacific is in position to pay its first dividend since 2001. Pangilinan said that decision was ultimately up to the board.

First Pacific's other big asset is a majority stake in Jakarta-based PT Indofood Sukses Makmur Tbk, the world's largest instant noodle maker.

Spurred partly by last week's sale of debt convertible to PLDT stock, shares in First Pacific hit their highest level in almost four years on Wednesday, touching HK$2.45. That still lags by far the HK$13 level First Pacific breached in the heady days of 1996.

Goldman Sachs said in a note following last week's debt sale that it expected "modest upside" for First Pacific shares this year, driven mainly by a potential share price increase at PLDT.

"To get more excited about FPAC shares, we would need to see either a major NAV-accretive (net asset value) investment or a sharp turnaround at 51 percent owned Indofood," the bank wrote, maintaining its "in-line" rating on First Pacific stock.

Turbulent times

After building First Pacific through deals in the 1980s and '90s, Pangilinan has in recent years presided over a divestiture program that left the group a shell of its former self.

Since the beginning of 1998, the company has made 17 asset disposals for a total of about $3.59 billion. While it took a loss on four of those deals, overall the sales generated average rates of return for First Pacific of roughly 22 percent on an annual basis.

But the US-educated Pangilinan objected to one big deal—the planned 2002 sale of First Pacific's Philippine assets, including PLDT.

A high-profile board battle ensued that ended in the departure of two top First Pacific executives.

Pangilinan, who at the time was chief executive of PLDT and executive chair of First Pacific, opposed the group's controlling shareholder, Indonesian tycoon Anthony Salim, who had arranged the sale. Pangilinan prevailed.

Both men had moved on, said Pangilinan, who is now chairman of PLDT and based in Manila.

He said First Pacific was looking at possibilities to join up with PLDT for telecoms investments.

PLDT expects to distribute 10 percent of its earnings for 2004 in dividends, its first payout since 2001. Analysts expect PLDT's net profits to rise 21 percent in 2005, according to Reuters Estimates.

While Indonesia and the Philippines are volatile economies, Pangilinan said he aims to prove that First Pacific's holdings there can nonetheless prosper.

"I'd like to show that PLDT could thrive even in volatile times, and I believe it will," said Pangilinan. *Reuters*

US earnings lift Tokyo, HK

SINGAPORE—Upbeat US earnings lifted shares in Tokyo, Hong Kong and Singapore on Wednesday, while better-than-expected US capital flows data helped to keep the dollar near a two-month high against the euro.

Japan's Nikkei average rose 0.36 percent to 11,464.54 in morning trade, with Fujitsu Ltd. gaining 1.4 percent after solid US technology earnings soothed worries about the sector's outlook.

MSCI's index of non-Japan Asian shares was flat, with gains on Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index offsetting weakness in Australia and Taiwan.

Samsung Electronics Co. Ltd., the world's top maker of memory chips, lost 0.62 percent in South Korea by 0230 GMT.

Singapore's Straits Times Index was 0.4 percent higher after a jump in shares of music player maker Creative Technology Ltd. Creative jumped 5.9 percent to a 3-year high on hopes for strong sales.

The dollar cost $1.3027 per euro flat from late levels in New York, where it marked a two-month high of $1.2995, and 102.39 yen It rose to around 103 yen in New York.

Having hit a five-year low of 101.67 yen on Monday, the dollar was about one yen away from a nine-year low of 101.24 yen.

In US stock trade, the Dow Jones industrial average gained 0.67 percent to 10.628.79. The Nasdaq Composite Index was up 0.87 percent at 2,106.04.

Traders turned their focus to the next batch of economic data that might yield clues about further US interest rate increases, which could boost the dollar.

On Wednesday reports are due on consumer prices, housing starts and jobless data.

Foreign investors pumped $81 billion into US assets in November, hitting a five-month high and far exceeding market forecasts for $55 billion and the record $60.3 billion trade gap notched the same month.

The data helped keep the market focused on the improving interest rate advantage the United States has over other countries.

Still, market participants said the dollar was poised for more losses versus the yen as traders took to heart Europe's view that Asian currencies should share more of the burden of recent dollar weakness.

Many analysts say the yen has the most to gain from such a view, as traders buy the currency as a proxy for other Asian units as it is the most liquid unit in the region. *Reuters*

Japan says economic recovery intact

TOKYO—The Bank of Japan and the government stuck to the view on Wednesday that Japan's economic recovery has lost some momentum but remains intact, citing signs of weakness in output.

The central bank and the government left the overall economic assessment in their respective monthly reports unchanged on Wednesday after downgrades in the previous two months.

However, both expressed concerns about faltering output and the BOJ also said the economy has slightly undershot its board members' growth forecasts made three months earlier.

"The economy continues a recovery trend, although there seem to be somewhat weak movements, mainly in production," the BOJ's monthly report said.

Earlier in the day, the central bank's Policy Board ended a two-day meeting by deciding to leave its ultra-loose monetary policy unchanged, as expected.

The BOJ said the economy was somewhat weaker than forecast by its board members in October due to production and inventory adjustments in the information technology (IT) sector.

In addition, the BOJ said a revamp in the government's calculation methods for gross domestic product (GDP) figures last November skimmed about one percentage point from growth forecasts by the bank's board members for fiscal 2004/05, ending March 31.

The board members' median forecast for GDP growth is now in around 2.5 percent in real, price-adjusted terms, it said.

Still, it said it expected the economic recovery to continue as overseas economies expanded and that adjustments in the IT-sector would be completed in or after the spring, or around April.

The government's monthly report also left the wording for the overall economic assessment unchanged, although it expressed caution on production and a higher yen. *Reuters*

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

CIRCULAR NO. 468
Series of 2005

The Monetary Board in its Resolution No. 13 dated 6 January 2005, approved the following rules and regulations that shall govern banks' investments in securities overlying securitization structures:

Section 1. Statement of Policy

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) aims to foster the development of a market for new financial products in the country and provide banks with expanded opportunities for investment diversification, while at the same time ensure that they hold sufficient capital commensurate to the risks inherent in these products.

Section 2. Definition

Securitization structures refer to:

(1) structures where the cash flow from an underlying pool of exposures is used to service at least two different stratified risk positions or tranches reflecting different degrees of credit risk (also known as traditional securitization); or

(2) structures with at least two different stratified risk positions or tranches that reflect different degrees of credit risk, where credit risk of an underlying pool of exposures is transferred, in whole or in part, through the use of credit derivatives or guarantees that serve to hedge the credit risk of the portfolio (also known as synthetic securitization).

Section 3. Qualified Banks

All universal/commercial banks with expanded derivatives authority may invest in securities overlying any tranche of securitization structures. Universal/commercial banks without expanded derivatives authority may also invest but only in securities overlying tranches of securitization structures that are rated at least A, or its equivalent, by a BSP-recognized credit rating agency.

Section 4. Capital Treatment

1. Credit risk

A. *Risk weights*

Capital charge for investments in securitization structures held in the banking book shall be based on the *latest* rating given by any of the following BSP-recognized credit rating agencies:

International rating agencies:
1. Moody's
2. Standard & Poor's
3. Fitch IBCA
4. Other international rating agencies as may be approved by the Monetary Board

Domestic rating agencies:
1. PhilRatings
2. Other domestic rating agencies as may be approved by the Monetary Board

The assignment of risk weights corresponding to agency ratings shall be as follows:

Risk weight	Moody's	Standard & Poor's	Fitch IBCA	PhilRatings
20%	Aaa to Aa3	AAA to AA-	AAA to AA-	Aaa to Aa
50%	A1 to A3	A+ to A-	A+ to A-	A
100%	Baa1 to Baa3	BBB+ to BBB-	BBB+ to BBB-	Baa
Deduction from total of Tier 1 and Tier 2 capital	Below Baa3	Below BBB-	Below BBB-	Below Baa
	Unrated			

B. *Use of ratings*

Ratings of BSP-recognized credit rating agencies shall be used as follows:

- Securities overlying securitization structures created within the Philippines may be rated by any BSP-recognized international or domestic credit rating agency, while securities overlying securitization structures created outside of the Philippines may only be rated by any of the international credit rating agencies that are recognized by the BSP; and
- In cases when overlying securities have split ratings which map into different risk weights, the higher risk weight should be used.

2. Market risk

Capital charge for securities overlying securitization structures held in the trading book shall be determined in accordance with BSP Circular No. 360 dated 3 December 2002, as amended, and the use of agency ratings for such purpose shall be consistent with the above principles.

This Circular shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication either in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

For the Monetary Board:

(Sgd.) **RAFAEL B. BUENAVENTURA**
Governor

12 January 2005

People, Events & Products

E-mail: pr_pep@inquirer.com.ph
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Editor Aries Espinosa

A colorful evening for Cebu business with GlobeSolutions

IT WAS an evening of triumphant partnerships and colorful business opportunities as the Queen City's business elite gathered at the Grand Ballroom of the Marriott Hotel recently for a stylish fete hosted by GlobeSolutions. Dubbed "Business in the Black," the affair was an elegant celebration of the corporate success achieved through the years by GlobeSolutions and its esteemed clientele.

GlobeSolutions head of sales Maridol Ylanan warmly welcomed GlobeSolutions' business clients during her opening speech, as Cebu's finest sipped cocktails and relaxed in the ambient lounge atmosphere. Popular diva Jude Bacalso set the tone for the audio-visual presentation that followed, with a soulful beat poetry performance about the meaning and significance of colors.

As a leading innovator in corporate mobile communications, GlobeSolutions provides a rainbow assortment of value-added services designed to meet specific business needs. Various hues and scenes from popular movies were interspersed to provide a visually appealing presentation of GlobeSolutions' VAS and the business issues they seek to address. Regal shades of violet represented TxtHotline, a direct customer-to-company messaging service, which aids clients in winning plum business accounts. The starkness of white characterized Mobile Mail's goal of creating a virtual office on-the-go, while companies on AutoloadMax Corporate Edition are assured of increased greenbacks through the service's secure management of company credits. The intercompany connectivity created by TxtConnect's mass-scale text broadcast system was presented through the steel-grey colors of technology while golden opportunities that come with the possibility of analyzing corporate billing information are unlocked by GlobeSolutions' forthcoming service BillAnalyzer.

The fusion of the various colors of corporate success culminated in a video introducing the new Blackberry colored tri-band handheld, with testimonials from international celebrities who are self-confessed Blackberry users and with GlobeSolutions' very own head of business development Paolo Lopez demonstrating the benefits of Blackberry's push-based mobile technology. The audience's enthusiastic response prompted Dan David, Globe Telecom's head of corporate Wireless Business Group, to propose a toast in honor of GlobeSolutions' corporate partners. "We at GlobeSolutions are forever challenging ourselves to give you services and products designed to work as hard as you do. To satisfy your business requirements. To facilitate vital communications. To improve your bottom line. To help you deliver positive business results," he said.

Afterwards, Jude once again took to the stage to entertain the guests with showtunes and OPM classics. And to make the evening more memorable, Blackberry units and other exciting prizes were raffled off. As the evening drew to a close, Guests capped the celebration by dancing to the sounds of The Ridge Band as they looked forward to enjoying the true colors of corporate success with GlobeSolutions.

RATE
IATION NIGH

GLOBE'S head of corporate wireless business Dan David toasts GlobeSolutions' Cebu partners.

HENRY Uy and Bebot Arriolo of Fast Cargo Logistics are flanked bv the GlobeSolutions team and Globe's head of corporate wireless business Dan David, Weng Moras, manager for corporate relations VisMin and sales manager for VisMin, Babes Rubi.

THE FIRST AND OFFICIAL CAMERA CLUB OF THE PHILIPPINES BOOK

The Camera Club of the Philippines' first and very own coffee table book is now available to the general public. The book has a total of 184 pages back-to-back with a foreword by fellow member Jaime Zobel de Ayala and edited by professor Franco Patriarca. It also includes the Club's 'History' by Bobby Paterno and updated by out-going Club president Lito Quimel. Production and layout was done by Emil Davocol of Photography Light Images and printed by Lex Media. By their sheer limited number, the remaining 200 soft and hard bound books are literally a limited edition and are destined to become a collector's item. Soft bound books are P1,500 while hard bound books are for P2,500. For more information and orders, call Karen at the club Secretariat (632)894-2987. Shown are (from left): Raul Montifar, 2005 incoming Club president; Patrick Uy, 2004 outgoing Club president; Dennis Valdes, Lex Media president; Alex Reyes, Lex Media vice president; and Antonio Lilles, CCP book project director.

Woodrose School offering partial scholarships

PAREF Woodrose - an all-girls school renowned for its solid and challenging academic program and personalized character formation - is offering scholarships to students of merit between the levels of Grade Four and Second Year High School. This 50 percent cost of education subsidy will be granted to the most promising candidates with a general subject average of at least 85 percent, top-notch Woodrose School entrance exam scores and superior communication skills as demonstrated in the interview.

An ideal private school for girls, Woodrose offers excellent learning and sports facilities in a safe and clean environment in Ayala Alabang. Small class sizes are maintained, guaranteeing an extraordinarily optimal teacher-student ratio of 1:10 across all grade and year levels. Coupled with the unique attention dedicated to personal formation through the Tutorial System -wherein every student is designated her own mentor to guide her in her holistic development - Woodrose is truly set apart from every other girls' school in the country today.

Application forms are available through the website or you may call the registrar's office at tel. nos. 850-6380 to 83 local 111. Due to the limited number of slots, only shortlisted scholarship candidates will be contacted. Deadline for application is Feb. 14.

3RD NATIONAL E-COMMERCE CONGRESS AND EXHIBIT

The 3rd National E-Commerce Congress and Exhibit held last Nov. 18 to 19 at Hotel Intercontinental, Makati City, was organized by the Philippine Internet Commerce Society (Pics). The congress theme was focused on 'Mobile and Electronic Commerce Meet - The Winning Formula' and was attended by 175 delegates, 27 exhibitors and 300 visitors. The congress was sponsored by Globe Telecom Inc, PLDT, Globe Quest, HSBC, Infostructure, Philippine Daily Inquirer and Business World. Shown (from left) are: Norelyn Babiera, Pics director and event manager; Washington Alto, Pics member; lawyer Teddy Kalaw, Pics member and secretary general of IP Coalition; Cristina Pastelero, Pics director; Mary Anne Tolentino, Pics president; Bobby Gantuangco, chair of Pics IT SME Awards 2004; Mon Lizardo, conference chair 2004 and Pics director; and Donald Lim, vice president for marketing of Inquirer.

Bits Clips

Japanese Language Training Center

THE PHILIPPINE-Japan Industrial and Cultural Exchange Foundation (Philjapanicef) recently launched its Japanese Language Training Center which aims to empower Filipinos towards global competitiveness by providing effective communication skills in the Japanese language through comprehensive training. Japan has opened its labor market to foreigners, therefore would-be applicants need to know how to read and speak the Japanese language with proficiency. Enrollment is from Jan. 17 to Jan. 21. Classes will start on Jan. 24. Philjapanicef and its Japanese Language Training Center are located at the ground and 4th floors, Golden Bldg, 1465-1485E. Rodriguez Sr. Ave., Quezon City. Tel. Nos. 726-2948/727-1613.

MAD at DLSU-Dasmariñas

THE COMMUNICATION Arts Department, College of Liberal Arts of De La Salle University-Dasmariñas holds its annual Media Awareness Days (MAD) from Jan. 17 to 21 in conjunction with La Sallian Days in the campus. Today at 1 to 4 p.m. Loren Legarda will speak on the "Journalist Revolutionist Towards Societal Changes".

FEU-NRMF-Medical Alumni Homecoming 2005

THE FEU-NRMF Medical Alumni Society Inc will celebrate its Annual Alumni Homecoming, Silver Jubilee Celebration of Class '79 and Scientific Convention on Jan. 19 to 22, to be held at the 5th Floor, Dr. Ricardo L. Alfonso Hall, FEU-NRMF Medical Center, Regalado Avenue West Fairview, Quezon City. The theme for this year is "Current Issues in Clinical Practice". Honorees are the Class of '59, '64, '74, '79, '84, '89, '94, '99. The Grand Alumni and Silver Jubilarian Night will be held on Jan. 22, at 6 p.m. at the Westin Philippine Plaza Hotel. For more details contact Cely Templanza-Ocampo or Santy Carabano at 935-0025/936-7151/0919-5041768.

Bronchoscopy seminar

THE ST. Luke's Medical Center's Institute of Pulmonary Medicine will be holding from Jan. 19 to 21 a hands-on seminar/workshop on bronchoscopy at the hospital's second floor conference room and animal laboratory. The seminar will provide a comprehensive review and update on diagnostic and therapeutic bronchoscopic procedures. Indications, containdications, complications and clinical applications of these procedures will be reviewed. The course will also feature a live demonstration by the experts to enable participants to have hands-on experience on animals. Interested parties can contact Dr. Alvin Penafiel at 723-0101 local 5421 or 4128 and (0920)923-8619.

Dr. Nudas turns 90

DR. HILARIO G. Nudas, PHD, UST 1950, also the founder and president emeritus of Eulogio Amang Rodriguez Institute of Science & Technology, celebrated his 90th birthday last Jan. 13 with his wife Belen and daughters Marilou and Marilyn.

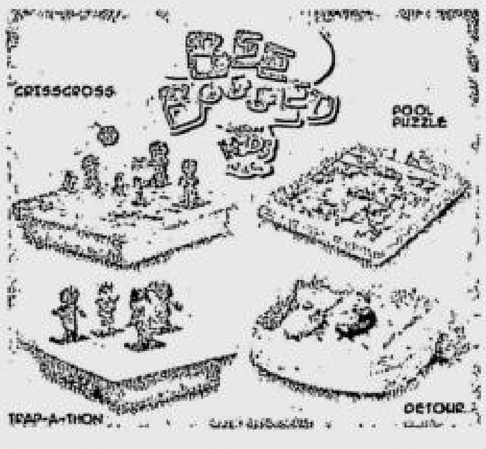
MAKING CITIES WORK

Senator Rodolfo Biazon launches the online version of 'Urbis 5: Making Cities Work' - the latest State of the Philippine Population Report (SPPR 03) from Popcom and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Looking on are UNFPA country representative Dr. Zahidul Huque (2nd from left) and Popcom executive director Tomas Osias (right). Urbis 5 focuses on the issues of population management and urbanization. The report may be accessed at www.popcom.gov.ph/sppr/sppr03.

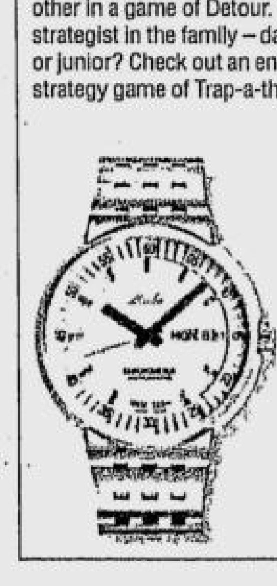
Product FILES

Be boggled with the new Jollibee Kids Meal toys

TO WELCOME the year 2005 with a bang, Jollibee is offering extreme mind-bending fun and excitement for you and your kids with its newest Jollibee Kids Meal "Bee Boggled"! Harness your kids' analytical and tactical skills with four exciting games that the whole family can play. Engage in friendly competition between parent and child in a mind sharpening game of Crisscross. Get your children and their playmates together for a fun activity of putting the Jollibee Gang Pool Party together in the Pool Puzzle. Let your kids have a fun bonding moment as you let them challenge each other in a game of Detour. Who could be the best strategist in the family – daddy, mommy, kuya, ate or junior? Check out an enthralling two-player strategy game of Trap-a-thon. The four new Bee Boggled toys come with every purchase of a Jollibee Kids Meal. Choose from any of your favorite Yumburger, Burger Steak, Jolly Spaghetti or Chickenjoy Kids Meals and bring home these easy-to-carry collectible toys only from Jollibee.



Mido All Dial



THE NEW All Dial by Mido seeks optimum readability by incorporating a dial which takes up as much space as possible in the watch. The case styling has been inspired by the Roman Coliseum, while the dial with its graduated stages is intended to reflect the shape of the stairways and diminish the case edge. Apart from two models in the standard size, the collection also includes 3 further models with a specially large case diameter of 42mm. The high quality, decorated self-winding movement is protected by a stainless steel case with a transparent back. On the large models, only COSC certified chronometer movements are used; this guarantees maximum rate accuracy. With its screwed crown and back the watch is water-resistant to 100 meters. Superluminova treatment of the hands and dial enables the time to be read even in the dark. This is a robust watch with a distinctive character, designed for people who like to wear something different. The Mido All Dial is available from Montré Watch Shop and Nocurfew Stores Nationwide with steel bracelet or rubber strap.

BARBIE PRINCESS OF THE DAY CONTEST WINNERS

Richwell Trading Corp (RTC) Barbie brand manager Cheer Morales (2nd from right) presents the winners of the Barbie Princess of the Day Contest together with RTC trade manager Gracious Trabajo (far right), Magna Vision marketing manager Joel Ramos (2nd from left) and Department of Trade and Industry representative Victoria Babaran. The winners are Alyanna Gan as Barbie Princess Rapunzel, Ma. Elyssa Dennise Constantino as Barbie in the Nutcracker and Krystal Gibbs as Barbie of Swan Lake.

LG launches new Karaoke system

THE NKS or New Karaoke System is a DVD Player and Karaoke Machine that offers more for the consumer than what is traditionally offered in the market. Packaged as a slim-designed DVD Karaoke, it offers a high-impact sound system that suppo rts international standards in audio - 3D Surround Sound, DTS, Dolby Digital, Dolby Prologic and Dolby Prologic II---that makes singing and viewing a pleasurable and fun experience. What differentiates the LG NKS DVD Karaoke is its ability to read and playback any kind of format - MPEG4/DivX, DVD + R/RW, Audio-CD, CD R/RW, MP3, WMA, VCD and SVCD. Its multi-format capability also supports Kodak Picture CD/ JPEG Viewer.

This multi-format capability of the NKS eliminates the concern of consumers that their old collections of disks will no longer be used, plus its compatibility with almost all popular formats makes it an ideal addition to your personal home entertainment system. The NKS technology is another innovation from LG Electronics that ups the standard in its category.

LG Electronics' goal is to enable the intelligent networking of digital products that will make consumers' lives easier than ever. For more information please log on to www.lge.com.ph or call the LG Customer Information Center at 6402525 or send an SMS to LG Text Service at 0917-8242525 (Globe) and 0920-9002525 (Smart).

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2004-330	100 units Manual Embosser.	P 11,500,000.00	LBP Funds
2004-339	1 lot Supply and delivery of CISCO ROUTERS or EQUIVALENT (15 units CISCO 2621 XM ROUTERS) (35 units CISCO 1751-V ROUTERS) (30 units CISCO 1721 ROUTERS)	P 14,300,000.00	LBP Funds

Bidding of the above requirements is scheduled on February 9, 2005 at 1:00 p.m. and the Bid Documents may be obtained from the Procurement Division of the General Services Department, 25th Floor, LANDBANK Plaza, M. H. del Pilar corner Dr. Quintos Streets, Malate, Manila, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P2,000.00 for each ITB.

Interested suppliers are requested to attend the Pre-Bid Conference scheduled on January 27, 2005 at the 25th Floor, Conference Room, LANDBANK Plaza, Malate, Manila.

All particulars relative to the Qualification/Eligibility, Bid Bond, Performance Bond, Pre-bid Conference, Bid Evaluation and Award of Contract shall be governed by the provisions of RA 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

Only those bidders who comply with the Bank's requirements shall be eligible to participate in the bidding.

LANDBANK reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to declare the bidding a failure or waive any defect or informality and to accept bids as may be considered most advantageous to the Bank.

COMMITTEE ON BIDS AND AWARDS

(PDI–Jan. 13 & 20, 2005)

GENERAL ITEMS FOR SALE

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PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given that Plates No. DJG-639 registered in the name of MERLINDA GARCIA, was lost per Affidavit of Loss dated Jan. 7, 2005 under Notarial Registry of Atty. Benjamin B. Tabaque as Doc. 300; Page 61; Book 286; Series of 2005.
(PDI - Jan. 13, 20 & 27, 2005)

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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LLB GRAD RESEARCHER 8528128 SALARY/COMMISSION

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

MALE/FEMALE

CAREGIVER T5280747

COOK/ACOUSTIC SINGER 6355530

EXTRA INCOME ASIAN NO. 1 IN BUSS PLS call or text 0921-4702888

Family Care Hospital Macaria Ave. Pacita Complex San Pedro Laguna is in need of a HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATOR preferably M.D. w/ experience. Send resume by mail c/o PRESIDENT FCH

REAL ESTATE AGENT with experinece and contact tel. 9280512 / 09178941622 Lopez

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC
Toyota Corona 4DR, Motor # 12RM-035460 Serial/Chassis #RT130-904699 Yr 1979, Plate # NPP-480 has been sold by Patricia Manotoc, daughter of Ricardo Manotoc to Jonathan P. Panes, License # N04-93-261715.

AUCTION

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On: Saturday 22nd January 2005 - 10:30am

ELECTRICALS; PUMPS; MOTORS; VALVES; STORAGE SYSTEMS; JEDEC TRAYS, ETC.

In over 700 lots including: -

ELECTRICAL - Control Panels; Terminal Boxes; Asstd. Power Supplies; Magnetic Contactors; Asstd. Circuit Breakers; Asstd. Fuses; Volt Meters; Lightning Arresters; Asstd. Transformers; Power Capacitors, etc.
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STORAGE/HANDLING SYSTEMS - STANLEY VIDMAR 7/8/9 Drawer Storage Systems; OLYMPIC Tote Boxes; Asstd. Pallet Jacks;
MISCELLANEOUS - INTERMEC Communication Junction Boxes; LAN Terminals; Filter Systems, ATLAS COPCO Cooler Elements; Asstd. Pillow Blocks; TORAY DOW Corning Silicone; 3M Tape; Plastic Tube; Transparent Tape; Polypropylene Strap; KING FLOW Meters; Asstd. Gauges; Asstd. KOMATSU Spare Parts; Blowers/Fan Units; Security Video Equipment; KARCHER Vacuum Cleaners; EUROSTAR High Pressure Washers; Asstd. Packaging Materials; ERGOTRON Land Racks; 500 kilos Approx. Black Jedec Trays

On View: Fri. 21st January 2005 - 9:00am to 5:00pm & morning of sale day
Refundable Deposit: Php50,000 (upon registration)
Please bring valid ID to be presented during registration

PLEASE NOTE: NO SLIPPERS/SANDALS, NO SLEEVELESS SHIRTS, NO SHORTS, NO SMOKING, NO VIDEO/CAMERA, NO CHILDREN - WILL BE ALLOWED ON THE AUCTION PREMISES
PLEASE CONTACT THE AUCTIONEERS OFFICE FOR MORE DETAILS

For further information please contact May Almudin at Tel: 852 2910 loc. 100
Email: may.almudin@henrybutcher.com

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E-mail:manila@henrybutcher.com
Website: www.henrybutcher.com/www.goindustry.com

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
SECURITIES & EXCHANGE COMMISSION
SEC Building, EDSA, Greenhills
City of Mandaluyong, Metro Manila

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Securities and Exchange Commission, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites qualified local bidders/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the REPAIR AND RENOVATION OF SEC OFFICES at 3rd, 7th and 9th FLOORS SEC Building.

a. Duly licensed Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships; or
b. Partnership duly organized under the laws of the Philippines and of which at least seventy five percent (75%) of the interest belongs to citizens of the Philippines; or
c. Corporation duly organized under the laws of the Philippines, and of which at least seventy five percent (75%) of the outstanding capital stock belongs to citizen of the Philippines; or
d. Cooperatives duly registered with the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) and
e. Bidder/Contractor must be in construction business continuously for 10 years.

Bidders/contractors should have a valid and current License and Registration issued by PCAB.

License	at least "Category C"
Registration	at least "SMALL B"

Bidders should have a similar completed contract within a period of five (5) years and must be at least fifty percent (50%) of the approved budget of the contract to be bid.

The budgets for the Contract to be bid are as follows:

a. 3rd Floor - Php 3,715,860.00
b. 7th Floor - Php 2,685,870.00
c. 9th Floor - Php 2,580,730.00

Application for Eligibility and Eligibility Forms will be available for issuance starting **January 13, 2005 to January 21, 2005** at the General Services Division, 4th Floor, SEC Building, EDSA, Greenhills, Mandaluyong City, upon presentation of PCAB license and a payment of a non-refundable fee of Five Hundred Pesos (P500.00).

Deadline for submission of Letter of Intent and opening of the Eligibility Envelope shall be on **January 24, 2005, 10:00 a.m.** at the Market Regulation Department (MRD) Conference Room, 6th Floor, SEC Building.

A complete set of bidding documents may be obtained by the eligible bidder starting **January 25 to February 2, 2005** at the General Services Division, 4th Floor, SEC Building, EDSA, Greenhills, Mandaluyong City, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **Two Thousand Five Hundred Pesos (P2,500.00)**. For further details, please contact Asst. Director Romeo O. Dauag at Tel. No. 727-3320.

Pre-Bid conference will be on **February 4, 2005, 10:00 a.m.** at the Market Regulation Department (MRD) Conference Room, 6th Floor, SEC Building.

Deadline for submission and opening of Technical and Price Proposal will be on **February 16, 2005, 10:00 a.m.** at the Market Regulation Department (MRD) Conference Room, 6th Floor, SEC Building. Late submission and/or incomplete bid documents will no longer be accepted.

Republic Act 9184, and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) shall govern all particulars relative to Eligibility, Bid Bond, Pre-Bid Conference, Bid Evaluation, Post Qualification and Awards of Contracts.

The SEC reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any required formalities therein and to award the contract to the bidder whose proposal as evaluated is most advantageous to the Commission

SEC also assumes no obligation whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidder for any expense or loss that may be incurred in the preparation of the bids, nor does it guarantee that any award will be made.

(Sgd.) JOSE AQUINO
Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI–Jan. 13 & 20, 2005)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY OMBUDSMAN FOR LUZON
3rd Floor, Ombudsman Bldg., Agham Road, Diliman, Quezon City

BULLETIN OF VACANT POSITIONS

(In compliance with R.A. 7041)

GRAFT PREVENTION & CONTROL OFFICER III, Item No. OMBA-GPCO3-1-1998; SG-18; Education: Bachelor's degree relevant to the job; Experience: 2 years of relevant experience; Training: 8 hours of relevant training: Eligibility: Career Service (Professional) Second Level Eligibility.

GRAFT PREVENTION & CONTROL OFFICER I, Item No. OMBA-GPCO1-1-1998; SG-11; Education: Bachelor's degree relevant to the job; Experience: None required; Training: None required; Eligibility: Career Service (Professional) Second Level Eligibility.

*** ASSOCIATE GRAFT INVESTIGATION OFFICER II**; Item No. OMBA-AGIO2-4-1998; SG-18; Education: Bachelor of Laws; Experience: Six months of experience in conducting community work systems studies/analyses, counselling, investigation or other related work; Training: 8 hours of relevant training; Eligibility: RA 1080 (BAR) OR Bachelor's degree relevant to the job; One year of experience in conducting community work, system studies/analyses, counselling, investigation or other related work; 8 hours of relevant training; Career Service (Professional); Relevant Eligibility for Second Level. * This is a republication of the vacancy published on July 18, 2004 at the Philippine Daily Inquirer. Previous applicants were already evaluated and processed. New applications will no longer be accepted.

Interested applicants should submit applications within ten (10) working days from the date of this publication to the Administrative Division, at the above address, the following: 1) an application letter stating the position/item applied for; 2) duly accomplished Personal Data Sheet (CSC Form 212); 3) 1" x 1" picture (colored); 4) CSC Certificate of Eligibility; 5) Transcript of Records; 6) Certificate of Seminars/ Training attended (CSC accredited) and 7) Certificate from previous/present employment stating the position, actual duties and responsibilities.

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Republic of the Philippines
ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION FOR AUTHORITY TO INSTALL, CONSTRUCT AND MAINTAIN PROPOSED MAJOR PROJECTS FOR YEAR 2004, WITH PRAYER FOR PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY

ERC CASE NO. 2004-436

ANGELES ELECTRIC CORPORATION (AEC),
Applicant
x-----------------------------------x

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES:

Notice is hereby given of the filing by applicant Angeles Electric Corporation (AEC) of an application for authority to install, construct and maintain proposed major projects for year 2004, with prayer for provisional authority, docketed as ERC Case No. 2004-436.

The Commission has set the application for hearing on **January 31, 2005 at two o'clock (2:00 p.m.) in the afternoon at the ERC Hearing Room, 15th Floor, Pacific Center Building, San Miguel Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City.**

All interested parties who may wish to comment on or oppose the said application should file their comments and/or oppositions on or before the date of hearing. Such parties who may wish to have the details of the application and who shall have manifested to the Commission their desire and intention to participate actively in the proceedings, may request that before the date of hearing, they be furnished with copies of the application by the applicant, which is hereby directed to furnish the parties making such request with copies of the application and its attachments. Likewise, any such interested party may examine the application and other pertinent records filed with the Commission during the usual office hours.

WITNESS, the Honorable **RODOLFO B. ALBANO, JR.**, Chairman, and the Honorables **OLIVER B. BUTALID, JESUS N. ALCORDO, RAUF A. TAN** and **ALEJANDRO Z. BARIN**, Commissioners, Energy Regulatory Commission, this 3rd day of January 2005 at Pasig City.

(Sgd.) FRUCTUOSO C. LAGUNZAD, JR.
Executive Director III

(PDI–Jan. 20, 2005)

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

We are announcing the dissolution of MARUSO PHILIPPINES CORPORATION effective December 31, 2004 as per board resolution dated December 20, 2004.

We are inviting all creditors and concern parties to contact us for any final settlement at 702 Citystate Centre, Shaw Blvd., Pasig City.

Any transaction entered on and before the said date will be no longer entertained.

(PDI–Jan. 20, 27 & Feb. 3, 2005)

LA/MAT/16498/2004 (17)
FCMC 10690/2004

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE
HONG KONG SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION
MATRIMONIAL CAUSES NO. 10690 OF 2004

BETWEEN

PADUA JESUSA NANQUIL — Petitioner
and
PADUA ALLAN MANIALI — Respondent

NOTICE

A TWO YEARS' SEPARATION PETITION has been filed against PADUA ALLAN MANIALI for the declaration of the said marriage to be dissolved. The Respondent's address is unknown, who may now apply to the Family Court Registry at M2 Floor, Wanchai Law Courts, Wanchai Tower, No. 12 Harbour Road, Hong Kong for a copy of the said Petition. If within one month he has not communicated with the Registry, the Court may hear the case in his absence

Registrar

This notice shall be advertised once in Philippine Daily Inquirer, a local English newspaper which publishes and circulates in Philippines.

(PDI–Jan. 20, 2005)

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
Regional Office No. IV

LICENSE FOR LOCAL PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT AGENCY

PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT AGENCY ☒ New ☐ Renewal
OPERATOR'S LICENSE NO. IVA-04-11-032

By authority vested in me by the Labor Code and the Omnibus Rules implementing the Code and payment of the license fee in the amount of SIX THOUSAND PESOS (P6,000.00) ONLY having been made as per Official Receipt Number 4329178 and posting in the appropriate cash and surety bond of P25,000.00 and P100,000.00 respectively having been complied with, this LICENSE is hereby GRANTED to MR. *ALFREDO A. CAYETANO* to establish, direct and/or manage the

SIGRA SERVICES INC
38 General Luna St. Ampid II San Mateo, Rizal

This license which expires on November 10, 2006 is valid in the Philippines. Transfer or use of by any other person or entity renders this license null and void.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Official Seal of the Regional Office No. IV Department of Labor and Employment to be affixed at the Calamba, Laguna, Philippines this 11th day of November 2004.

(Sgd.) ATTY. MAXIMO B. LIM, CESO III
Regional Director

(PDI - Jan. 20, 2005)

CALL POEA
24-HOUR HOTLINES
722-1144
or
722-1155

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY

Quezon City

MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR
No. AO -2k5-01-001
Date 1-18-05

TO : ALL RICE-BASED FARMERS ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER SECTORS (INDIVIDUALS AND ENTITIES)
FROM : THE NFA ADMINISTRATOR
SUBJECT : GENERAL GUIDELINES ON THE PARTICIPATION OF FARMERS' ORGANIZATIONS AND ALL OTHER SECTORS IN THE IMPORTATION OF RICE FOR YEAR 2005

Pursuant to the powers granted to the National Food Authority (NFA) under Presidential Decree No. 4, as amended, to establish rules and regulations governing the importation of rice and by virtue of Council Resolution No. 200-2K5 this Memorandum Circular is hereby issued for the information and compliance of all concerned.

A. GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Rice importation under this circular shall be undertaken under a regime with Quantitative Restrictions in place pursuant to Republic Act No. 8178. However, instead of the National Food Authority (NFA) issuing import permits, all rice importation other than NFA's shall be covered by Letters of Credit (LC), Documents Against Acceptance (DA) and Documents Against Payment (DP) to be opened with the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP).

2. In line with the government's policy of providing assistance to rice farmers to become agri-enterpreneurs, Farmers' Organizations (FOs) whose membership consist of at least 50% + 1 palay farmers, shall be granted initially 75% of the rice import volume or 150,000 MT. All other sectors shall be allocated 25% of the volume to be imported or 50,000 MT.

3. FOs and other sectors intending to avail of the privilege to engage in the business of importing rice must first secure a license from the NFA as an importer and other incidental lines of business activity. They shall be subject to the usual licensing requirements which include among others, proof of its operations and active grains business activity from 2003 or earlier. The license shall be valid for one year and shall expire on December 31, 2005.

4. All importation shall be subject to the payment of tariff/duties, taxes and other fees that may be required. NFA shall, from time to time, prescribe a benchmark price that will be the basis of the LBP to evaluate the advance duties to be deposited by the importer.

5. Each importer whether FOs or other sectors can only avail of a maximum of 5,000 MT for the entire year.

6. The import volume shall be available to all FOs and all other sectors nationwide. However, the volume of 150,000 MT shall initially be exclusively allocated to qualified FOs while 50,000 MT shall be allocated for all other sectors, excluding rice based FOs, on a first-come-first-served basis. All other sectors shall have until May 31, 2005 to open/avail of LC, DA and DP with LBP.

Out of the 150,000 MT exclusively allocated to FOs, 75,000 MT shall be opened on a first-come-first-served basis to all qualified FOs nationwide. FOs have until April 15, 2005 to open/avail Letters of Credit, DA and and deposit the required advance duties with the LBP. Any unavailed allocation shall be open to all importers (FOs/ all other sectors).

The remaining 75,000 MT shall be provided on a per region basis depending on the percent of rice land harvested in a given region over the national harvested hectarage. The regional allocation shall be divided equally among qualified FOs within each region. FOs have until April 30, 2005 to open/avail of LC, DA and DP and deposit the required advance duties with LBP. Any unavailed allocation shall be forfeited and be opened/made available to all FOs/all other sectors on a first-come-first-served basis.

7. Any unavailed allocation mentioned above shall be made available to both FOs/all other sectors nationwide. They have until May 31, 2005 to open/avail of the corresponding LC, DA and DP on a first-come-first -served basis.

8. FOs using DA and DP shall be required to pay in advance with the LBP an amount corresponding to 50% of the duties/tariff while all other sectors shall pay in advance with the LBP an amount corresponding to full duties to be paid for the importation. The payment of the partial/full advance duties/tariff shall be the basis of determining the first-come-first-served rule.

9. The volume of rice to be imported for 2005 is initially set at 200,000 MT which shall be part of the country's food security requirement. Any volume which the FOs/all other sectors fail to import out of this allocation, shall be imported by the NFA if still necessary.

10. Interested FOs licensed as importers shall open/avail their LC, DA and DP with the LBP head office and such other LBP branches that may bedesignated, subject, however, to eligibility requirements that LBP may prescribe.

11. Violators of the 2003 and 2004 circulars on rice importation under the FAI program are disqualified to participate in the 2005 importation unless payment of penalties has been made.

12. As much as possible, rice to be imported should be fortified with iron micro nutrient in compliance with the Philippine Food Fortification Law under Republic Act 8976.

B. ARRIVAL OF IMPORTATION

1. The imported rice stocks should arrive not later August 15, 2005. All legally imported rice that arrive beyond the prescribed date shall subject the importer to penalty based on the following schedule:

No. of days after deadline	Penalty (% of landed cost)	No. of days after deadline	Penalty (% of landed cost)
* 1 - 4 days	- 0.5%	* 11 - 12 days	- 2.5%
* 5 - 6 days	- 1%	* 13 - 15 days	- 3%
* 7 - 8 days	- 1.5%	* 16 - 60 days	- 30%
* 9 - 10 days	- 2%	* 61 days and beyond	- forfeiture of entire cargo in favor of NFA

The aforementioned penalty may also be effected with the withholding or forfeiture of the corresponding percentage of the imported rice.

2. In case the FO/all other sector availed of the allocation but failed to bring into the country the allocated volume, an amount corresponding to equivalent of 10% of the import value will be forfeited in favor of the NFA as penalty. This amount may be taken from the advance dutes said importer paid the LBP/BOC. The corresponding amount shall be credited by BOC to NFA;

3. Rice cargoes must be inspected both at the load port and discharge port by surveyor/s to be appointed/chosen by the importer from a list provided by the NFA. The surveyor's services shall be for the account of supplier and/or importer.

4. The discharge ports for the 2005 importation are the Port of Manila, the Manila International Container Port, the Port of Batangas, the Port of Cebu, the Port of Cagayan de Oro and the Subic Port.

C. SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

1. Importers must meet/submit/accomplish the following requirements subject, however, to changes, amendments or revisions as NFA, LBP and BOC may hereafter prescribed. National Food Authority (NFA)

- Must be holders of NFA license as importer. To secure a license as importer, the following are required:

  For entities:
  - 2 x 2 pictures of the representative
  - Articles of Incorporation, By-Laws and all amendments thereto
  - Recent Secretary's Certificate of a Board Resolution authorizing the representative to sign for and in behalf of the entity who shall be an officer/ shareholder/ member/ employee of the cooperative/corporation/association.
  - Certificate of Registration from the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)/ Cooperative Development Authority (CDA)/Bureau of Labor Relations (BLR)/Bureau of Rural Workers (BRW)/National Irrigation Administration (NIA).
  - Certificate of Good Standing or Certification from their respective registering agencies that said FO is currently operational/active.
  - For SEC registered entities, a copy of the current year Information Sheet duly received by SEC.
  - For Provincial Farmers Action Council (PFAC) members, certification from the PFAC Chairman or his authorized representative that the FO is a bonafide member and is rice-based.
  - For non-PFAC members, certification from local Barangay Chairman or Municipal Agricultural Officer (MAO) as to the existence of the farmer group in the locality/area and its being rice-based FO.
  - Income Tax Return for the preceding year with audited financial statements.

  For Individuals:
  - 2 x 2 pictures of the applicant
  - Income Tax Returns of the preceding year
  - Financial statement showing assets and liabilities for the preceding year if applicant's capitalization in the rice business exceeds P100,000.00
  - License Fees P3,000.00 per applicant for rice based FO. P20,000.00 per applicant for all other sectors
  - For FOs found to have violated year 2003 and 2004 circulars, proof of payment of penalties.
- Advanced information (at least 10 days before the cargo arrives) on the quality, quantity (complete specifications), origin, supplier, price on C & F basis, expected date of arrival, name of carrier/ vessel and discharging port of the rice being imported, plus a copy of the sales contract and loadport surveyor's report.

Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP)

As required by LBP, below is the list of documents required for importation transactions whether using LC, DA or DP:

- Duly accomplished Import Entry Declaration (IED)
- For importers using the LC as their financial instrument, advance deposit corresponding to the full duties to be paid for the importation.
- Only Manager's or Cashier's checks issued by a reputable commercial/universal bank in Metro Manila or such other areas as may be designated by LBP shall be accepted as payment for LC.
- Original copy of pro-forma invoice signed by the supplier and duly accepted by the buyer, indicating the specification of rice to be imported, term and mode of payment, among others, of the importation.
- Original and photocopy of the NFA license as importer.
- Duly accomplished LC application form.
- Accomplished ITOD signature card of the authorized signatory and/or authorized representative (for importation purposes) duly authenticated by the LBP. (Form Provided)
- Certification that the authorized signatory of the FO/entity or the individual as the case maybe, has read and understood the program guidelines and that he/she voluntarily binds himself/ herself to abide by all the rules and regulations regarding the importation particularly the penalty provisions. (Form Provided)
- Sworn attestation, as required by LBP. (Form Provided)
- Execution of Forward Exchange Contract, for peso payment.
- Notarized Application to Purchase Dollars, for US dollars payment.
- Presentation of the original and submission of certified true copy of the Certificate of Registration with the CDA or SEC.
- Presentation of the original and submission of certified true copy of the Articles of Cooperation and By-Laws.
- Original copy of the Board Resolution or notarized Secretary's Certificate stating therein the authorized signatory in the opening of LC and use of other financial instruments (DA, DP).
- Processing fee (non-refundable) of P1,000.00 per application.
- Authority to forfeit in favor of NFA the 10% of the landed cost in case the importer fails to bring into the country the allocated volume to be imported or to provide advance information on rice shipment or to use loadport and disport surveyors and/or the prescribed penalty if rice cargo arrives after prescribed dates. (Form Provided)
- Registration as importer with CIIS as required by BOC, if applicable.
- Audited Financial Statements (when necessary)

Additional Requirements for Using Letter of Credit:

- Duly accomplished Letter of Credit Application Form.
- Manager's Check (and its photo copy) for LC cover, buffer, full duties and other charges.
- Execution of Forward Exchange Contract, for Peso payment.

Additional Requirements for Using Documents Against Acceptance or Documents Against Payment

- Manager's Check (and its photo copy) for the full duties and bank charges.
- Letter of Intent that the farmers' organization will be importing via DA or DP. (Form Provided)
- Filled-up form of record of goods imported. (Form Provided by LBP)

Bureau of Customs (BOC)
For unloading and release of rice cargo, the following are required:

- Registration as importer with CIIS
- Advanced information (at least 10 days before the cargo arrives on the quality, quantity (complete specifications), origin, supplier, price on C & F basis, expected date of arrival, name of carrier/ vessel and discharging port of the rice being imported, plus a copy of the sales contract and loadport surveyor's report.
- For importers that use DA or DP, an NFA clearance that they have provided the needed advance information on their importation.
- NFA License as importer
- VAT or non-Vat certificate of applicant
- TIN Card of the company
- For cooperatives, registration documents with the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA)
- 2 x 2 pictures (4 copies) with official signature of the applicant
- Audited Financial Statements for the past three years, if applicable
- Summary of Importation for the past three years, if applicable
- BOI Certificate of Registration, if applicable
- Income Tax Return of the company, partners, proprietor/owner for the past three years, if applicable
- Affidavit of Assets - Statement of Assets and Liabilities filed with BIR
- Name of retained-in-house broker, if applicable

2. he PFAC shall be provided by the NFA with a list of non-PFAC member applicants. The PFAC shall be given five (5) calendar days to report to the NFA and present proof that the non-PFAC member is disqualified or not eligible to participate in the rice importation.

3. Failure to either submit an accomplished Import Entry Declaration (IED) to LBP or deposit in advance an amount corresponding to the duties to be paid will result in the loss of privilege to import rice while failure to provide the NFA and BOC the required advance information relative to rice imported or use load port and discharge port surveyor/s will subject the importer to 10% penalty of the landed cost of the cargo which may be effected with the withholding of the corresponding percentage of the imported rice.

4. Aside from the penalties mentioned above, the offender shall also be subject to administrative proceedings where the penalty of suspension and/or cancellation of its NFA license shall be imposed.

5. The Business Regulations Department (BRD) in coordination with the Extension Department (EXD) shall undertake information dissemination of the FAI program. It shall publish Memo/Letter Circular/s, Notice/s and/or Rules and Regulations that NFA may issue relative to farmers' importation in a newspaper of general circulation and register the same with the Office of the National Administrative Register of the UP Law Center.

6. The Marketing Operations Department (DMO) shall prepare a consolidated report on the arrival of stocks and LCs/other instruments opened with or coursed through the LBP on a regular basis or as the need arises

D. REPEALING CLAUSE

All rules and regulations, circulars, directives and/or orders or parts thereof, inconsistent with any of the provisions of these guidelines are hereby repealed, modified and/or amended accordingly.

E. EFFECTIVITY

The guidelines shall take effect upon approval.

APPROVED:

(SGD) GREGORIO Y. TAN, JR.
Administrator

(PDI – January 20, 2005)

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY

Region V, Pier Site, Legazpi City
☎ # 480-7085 Fax # 480-7900

INVITATION TO BID FOR THE SALE OF USED/SECOND HAND PROPERTIES "AS IS, WHERE IS" BASIS

The National Food Authority (NFA), Region V will conduct a public bidding of the following used/second hand properties:

LOCATION	LOT#	ITEM DESCRIPTION	QTY/UNIT	MINIMUM BID PRICE
I-ALBAY	1.1	SATAKE RICEMILL, 5 TPH Property No. 0-NFA-501-PE-A-003	one (1) set	Php 270,000.00
	1.2	BERNABE CONO RICEMILL 12 bags/hr. Property No. 0-NFA-502-PE-A-002	one (1) set	9,000.00
	1.3	CARGO TRUCK, ISUZU 10 WHEELER Plate # SBD-616 Property # 0-NFA-501-LT-B-001	one (1) unit	98,750.00
	1.4	CARGO TRUCK, HINO Plate # SCH-601 Property # 0-NFA-501-LT-B-005	one (1) unit	79,300.00
	1.5	CORN MILL, JOHN DEERS Model 1104 Property # 0-NFA-501-PE-F-001	one (1) unit	2,000.00
	1.6	GAS EXTRACTION MACHINE Property # 0-NFA-501-OP-A-001 0-NFA-501-OP-A-002	two (2) units	3,000.00
	1.7	POWER TRANSFORMER, 25 kva Brand: Westinghouse	two (2) units	3,600.00
	1.8	PACKAGING MACHINE Brand: Long good Property # 0-NFA-501-WE-A-002	one (1) unit	54,000.00
	1.9	FOGGING MACHINE Brand : Swingfog SN 11 Ser.#: 15597/15605 Property # 0-NFA-501-WE-B-001 0-NFA-501-WE-B-003	two (2) units	2,000.00
	1.10	PLATFORM SCALE Brand. Century Cap.: 1,000 kg Ser. # 9110311 Property # 0-NFA-501-WE-C-020	one (1) unit	1,000.00
II-CAM. SUR	II.1	PACKAGING MACHINE Brand: Long Good Property # NFA-502-PE-E-001	one (1) unit	54,000.00
		MOBILE DRIER Brand: Anihan Cap.: 1.25 ton/batch		
	II.2	Property # NFA-502-PE-B-049	one (1) unit	27,000.00
	II.3	# NFA-502-PE-B-050	one (1) unit	27,000.00
	II.4	# NFA-502-PE-B-051	one (1) unit	27,000.00
III-CAM NORTE		MOBILE DRIER Brand: Anihan Cap. : 1.25 ton/batch		
	III.1	Property # 00-NFA-503-PE-B-007	one (1) unit	27,000.00
IV-SORSOGON		MOBILE DRIER Brand : Anihan Cap.: 1.25 ton/batch		
	IV.1	Property # 01-NFA-504-PE-B-010	one (1) unit	27,000.00
	IV.2	# 01-NFA-504-PE-B-011	one (1) unit	27,000.00
	IV.3	# 01-NFA-504-PE-B-012	one (1) unit	27,000.00
V-MASBATE		MOBILE DRIER Brand : Anihan Cap. : 1.25 ton/batch		
	V.1	Property # 01-NFA-505-PE-B-006	one (1) unit	27,000.00

Schedule of Bidding are as follows:

Submission of letter of intent	February 10-15, 2005	Submission of Bids	9:00 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.
Issuance of Bid documents	February 10-15, 2005	Opening of Bids	10.00 a.m
Bidding proper	February 17, 2005		

Bid documents shall be issued only to interested bidders upon presentation of a letter of intent and a non-refundable fee of Php 300.00 to the FADC secretarial not later than February 15, 2005.

Venue for the opening of Bids shall be at the conference room, NFA Regional Office V, Pier Site, Legazpi City.

(Sgd.) JOSE B. GUEVARA
Asst. Regional Director Chairman-FADC

(PDI – January 19, 20 & 21, 2005)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PHYSICAL FACILITIES AND SCHOOLS ENGINEERING DIVISION
DepED Complex, Meralco Avenue
Pasig City, Philippines

Invitation for Bids

IFB Number : CY2004-SEMP-DepED-SBP-01
January 15, 2005
Loan No. 7118 PH
Project Title : Social Expenditure Management Project 2 (SEMP 2) Under the 10% Unallocated Portion
Contract Title : Conservation of Heritage School Building

1. The Government of the Republic of the Philippines has received a loan from the International Bank for the Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) to provide a budget support facility towards the financing of the Social Expenditure Management Project 2 (SEMP 2) in various currencies. It is intended that part of the proceeds of this facility will be applied to eligible payments under the contracts for School Building Program (SBP) to be implemented by the Department of Education (DepED).
2. The Department of Education (DepED) through the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) of DepED Central Office, DepED Complex, Pasig City now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the Conservation of School Buildings at Pampanga High School.

School	Scope of Works
Pampanga High School, San Fernando City, Pampanga	Conservation of Heritage School Building

3. For purposes of this bid, eligible bidders must have experience in works of similar nature and must have completed a restoration project for a heritage structure or complete repair/rehabilitation of school building, preferably under the guidance of a qualified conservation architect.
4. Interested eligible bidders may acquire a complete set of bid documents starting January 17, 2005 upon submission of letter of intent to the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) at DepED Central Office, DepED Complex, Meralco Ave., Pasig City, Tel. No. 636-6543. A complete set of bid documents will be available for a non-refundable fee of Php 3,000.00.
5. The provisions in the Instructions to Bidders and in the General Conditions of the Contract are provisions of the World Bank Standard Bidding Documents, Procurement of Works.
6. Bids shall be valid for a period of ninety (90) days after Bid opening and must be accompanied by security of three (3%) percent of total bid price in the form of a bank guarantee; cashier's/Manager's check or an irrevocable letter of credit.
7. Pre Bid Conference and Bid Opening dates are as follows:

School	Venue	Pre Bid Conference	Bid Opening
Pampanga High School	Bulwagan ng Karunungan, DepED Central Office	January 31, 2005 / 2:00 PM	February 14, 2005 / 10:00 AM

8. The Department of Education reserves the right to accept or reject any bid; or to annul the bidding process or reject all bids at any time prior to contract award without incurring any liability to Bidders.

(Sgd.) JUAN MIGUEL M. LUZ
Undersecretary and Chair, Bids and Awards Committee
DepED Complex, Meralco Avenue, Pasig City

(PDI–January 13 & 20, 2005)

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Jose Martin "MARTINET" H. Ventosa

Peacefully joined our Creator on January 17, 2005 at the age of 59.

His beloved wife **Gemma Meñez Ventosa**; children **Angelie & Bernard, Carlo & Ry, Lea** and **Karen**; grandsons **JM & Aidan**, request fervent prayers and special petitions for the repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Charity Chapel, Don Bosco Parish Church, Makati.

Interment of ashes will be on Saturday, January 22, 2005 at the Sacred Heart National Shrine after the 9:00 a.m. Mass at the Charity Chapel of Don Bosco Parish Church, Makati.

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."

— 2 Corinthians 5:8

WILFRIDO YLAGAN ENCARNACION

Peacefully joined our Lord and his parents Virgilio & Araceli on January 18, 2005 at the age of 60.

Willie will be remembered by his children **PATRICIA & CARISSA**; their mother **REBECCA**; son-in-law **DAVID**; grandchildren **DAVID THOMAS** and **JOSEPH DANIEL**; his brothers **EDGAR** and **GERRY**; his sister **BABSIE**; sisters-in-law **RAQUEL** and **BAMBI**; nephews and nieces.

He was cremated on January 19, 2005. Relatives and friends may pay their respects at La Funeraria Paz, 143 G. Araneta Ave. cor. Kalirava Street, Quezon City from the evening of January 19 to the morning of January 21, 2005.

We request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

(Matthew 6:19-21)

The Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation
(PAGCOR)

deeply mourns the passing of

Commo. Domingo H. Calajate (Ret.)

Member, PAGCOR Board of Directors
Philippine Military Academy Class of 1960

Who peacefully joined our Creator on January 17, 2005
at the age of 68

The whole PAGCOR Family

The Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
The Board of Directors
All officers and staff

Express their most heartfelt condolences to his family and offer their prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie at the Holy Child Chapel Mortuary, Bonifacio Naval Station, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City

Interment will be on Saturday, January 22, 2005, 12 noon
Libingan ng mga Bayani
Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City

WONG KWOK PING

(JIMMY WONG)

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord on January 17, 2005 at the age of 56.

His bereaved wife Elina Ho; daughter Ryanne; other relatives and friends request the readers to join them in praying for his eternal happiness in heaven.

His remains lie in state at Chapel C, La Funeraria Paz, Araneta Ave., Quezon City.

There will be a short service on Saturday, January 22, 2005 at 11:00 a.m. Cremation will follow at Paz Crematory at 12:00 p.m.

In Loving Memory

on the 15th Death Anniversary of

MERCEDES R. CUADRANTE

Who died in the Grace of our Lord on January 20, 1990.

Masses will be offered at the following churches:

Sanctuario de San Jose, *Greenhills, San Juan* .... 7:15 AM
6:15 PM
Mary The Queen, *Greenhills, San Juan* .... 6:00 AM
7:00 AM
6:00 PM

Her family, relatives and friends request the pious readers to say a prayer in her memory for the eternal repose of her soul.

The Board of Directors, Management & Staff of
LUBECA MARINE SERVICES, INC.
and
GERMAN MARINE AGENCIES, INC.
announce with deep sorrow the passing of our beloved

MR. PETER BORCHERS

General Manager and Director
January 22, 1963 – January 16, 2005

His remains lie in state at Barcelona Chapel, Loyola Memorial Park, Sucat Parañaque.

Cremation will be on January 23, 2005 at the Manila Memorial Park after the 10:00 a.m. Holy Mass.

His parents, brother, friends and associates request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

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Bellestar Promotions, Inc.'s Best Employee of 2004 Marian Daamo

SHOWN is Bella Dimayuga (right), Bellestar's chair of the board and Bernadine Marie Marcial (left), president and CEO of Bellestar congratulating Marian Daamo for earning the Best Employee Award for 2004 awarded Dec. 22 at Manila Diamond Hotel. Marian is currently the choreographer of the production department.

PMAP elects new president

THE PERSONNEL Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP), the premier organization of Human Resource Management (HRM) professionals in the country, has elected its new president Lina A. Aseneta, FPM principal for finance, HR and administration of Fernandez, Santos and Lopez, CPAs. Aseneta, has been active in PMAP committees and activities since 1993 and served in the board from 1999 to 2002, having held the positions of treasurer and vice president in 2001 and 2002 respectively. She was overall chair of PMAP's annual conference for 2002 and 2003. A graduate of BSC in Economics (cum laude) from the University of the East, she has worked as administrative manager and principal for finance and administration for other companies. An active rotarian, she is the immediate past president of Rotary Club of Roces, Rotary International District 3780, Quezon City. She has been awarded Most Outstanding Rotarian in 2002 and 2003. Induction ceremonies of the new officers and board members of PMAP are set for Jan. 26, at the Garden Halls of Dusit Hotel Nikko in Makati City during the association's first general monthly meeting of the year.

Arriba Job Fair 2005

THE CAREER and Job Placement Office of the Guidance and Counseling Center of Colegio de San Juan de Letran cordially invites all Letran graduating students and alumni to the Arriba Job Fair 2005 on Jan. 26 and 27, 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Letran grounds. Take part in this momentous event. For more information, call Marionne Catalig-Rotaquio (placement counselor) at 5273802; 5277693 to 95 loc. 21.

St. Mary's College Quezon City batch 1980 will hold a reunion party on February 20, 2005 (Sunday) 2:00 p.m. at the Quezon City Sports Club.

To confirm attendance, please call Rodina Mayuga Esguerra at 921-0405, 921-0415 and 426-5501.

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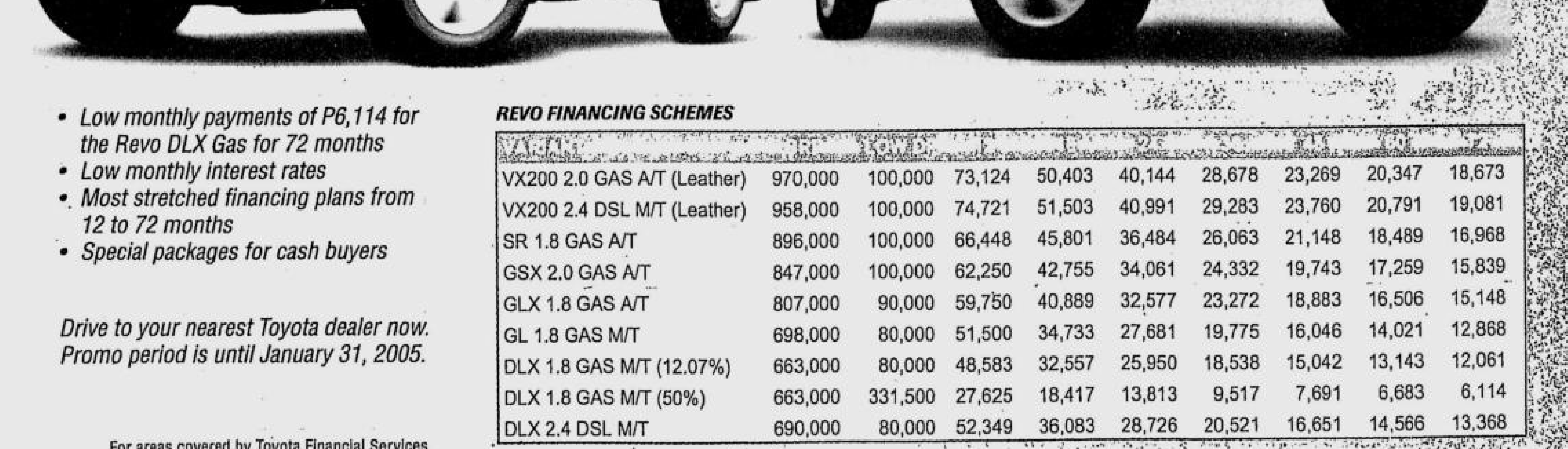

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SR 1.8 GAS A/T	896,000	100,000	66,448	45,801	36,484	26,063	21,148	18,489	16,968
GSX 2.0 GAS A/T	847,000	100,000	62,250	42,755	34,061	24,332	19,743	17,259	15,839
GLX 1.8 GAS A/T	807,000	90,000	59,750	40,889	32,577	23,272	18,883	16,506	15,148
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DLX 1.8 GAS M/T (12.07%)	663,000	80,000	48,583	32,557	25,950	18,538	15,042	13,143	12,061
DLX 1.8 GAS M/T (50%)	663,000	331,500	27,625	18,417	13,813	9,517	7,691	6,683	6,114
DLX 2.4 DSL M/T	690,000	80,000	52,349	36,083	28,726	20,521	16,651	14,566	13,368

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Food worthy of the gods

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

MIRIAM Balingit sent to my house a box of Food for the Gods as Christmas gift for my niece Monique. When my niece came to collect her gifts, for some reason, this one got left behind.

I usually ignore stuff wrapped in cellophane because their contents are too predictable. But a day or so before New Year, when the box had been sitting atop my counter for roughly two weeks, I tried a piece to satisfy my craving for something sweet. To my surprise, it was the best Food for the Gods I'd tasted in a long time, one of the best in my lifetime in fact.

The bar oozed with the flavor of pure butter, nuts and dates. To make this long story short, I finished the whole box, a gift I tremendously enjoyed although the name on the card was Monique and, if my memory serves me right, my name is Reggie!

So those who in the habit of sending their presents to my house for distribution, let this be a warning to you that there is no guarantee that your gift will get to the intended recipient. Ha-ha-ha!

This seems like a great year for food finds. This is my second discovery and it's just the third week of January! I strongly recommend you try them. The baker, Livy Briones (3722740 or 0917-9757330), sells them for P135 a dozen, amazingly cheap for something so delicious!

I think that if all Foods for the Gods tasted like this, the gods would indeed be very pleased!

'Hito,' the Thai way

I would like to ask for other dishes using *hito*. I ate in a Thai restaurant and they used it in a salad with green mangoes. But I could not afford to experiment with expensive ingredients that you sometimes specify for your featured recipes.

BABY UCPB

Oh, you mean Crispy Catfish Salad, known in Thailand as *Yum Pla Dook Foo*. *Yum* means spicy in Thai, that's why most of their foods have the word yum attached to them.

Here it is, my well-guarded secret to making the crispiest catfish outside of Thailand! In Thai cooking there are four basic tastes/flavors you play with, salty, spicy, sweet, sour and sometimes, even bitter. The key to success is finding the perfect balance of all these.

In making the sauce, remember, adjust sugar, fish sauce, lime juice and chilies according to what you consider delicious.

1 k catfish, cleaned
3 c vegetable oil
1 tsp salt
1 tsp white pepper
3 c vegetable oil for deep frying

Steam catfish until soft, 10-15 minutes, depending on size. Skin fish and flake. Drop pieces of flaked fish into vegetable oil and season with salt and pepper.

With your fingers continue to mash fish flakes to separate them. Before serving, heat up three cups of vegetable oil until smoking (by the way, when I say smoking, I mean anywhere between 350-375°F, deep-fry oil temperature not the type that requires a fire extinguisher).

When hot, get about ¼ c of fish and, with your fingers drop it little by little while still trying to separate pieces, working in a circular fashion, and sprinkling them to cover the surface of the pan.

When golden, use a chopstick to "gather" the net-like fish flakes together and take out of the pan. Drain on paper towels. Fry the rest of the catfish and serve atop green mangoes.

4-5 green Indian mangos, grated/julienned (a specific mango grater for Thai cooking is available in Chefs Nook, 7245812)

¼ c peanuts or cashews, toasted and coarsely pounded, optional

3 shallots, thinly sliced

Combine in a serving platter. Toss dressing. Top with catfish.

Mix well and serve.

3 tbsp fish sauce, preferably Tiparos Brand (Chefs Nook)

2 long Thai red chili peppers, minced (Lolita's or Zeny's Vegetables, Farmers Market)

1 tbsp sugar

juice of 2-3 limes

Combine ingredients and adjust according to preference.

Stain-less mug

I have a favorite mug but it is full of stains. How do I clean my favorite coffee mug?

JM TIRON

To remove those awful coffee and tea stains in coffee makers, mugs and teapots, dilute ¼ c baking soda in four cups of warm water. Leave stained material to soak for 30 minutes then rinse. For difficult to remove stains, soak overnight in baking soda solution and dishwashing soap.

Post-holiday cooking

The Reggie Aspiras School of Culinary Arts is holding the following classes:

Jan. 21–All new (in collaboration with Midas)—Learn ways to prepare delicious dishes with inexpensive fish varieties from steamed, fried, pan-fried, grilled, etc.—cherne, skate, pollock fillets, river cobbler, nile perch, ocean perch and parrot

Jan. 22–After the Holidays Cooking Thin/Diet Cuisine 1—2 soups, 6 diet salad dressings, 6 easy diet pastas, 6 easy and delicious diet main dishes, 3 diet desserts. (special class, P 2,500+)

Jan. 24–Fresh Pasta Workshop Part 2 - Hands-on, All new—Gnocchi 3 kinds: Potato with Salmon and Caviar, Ricotta with Mushroom, Spinach with Light Tomato Sauce; Flavored Ravioli Dough 2 kinds: Prawn Stuffed with Truffle Flavored Ravioli Dough, Mascarpone-stuffed Spinach Ravioli with Mushroom Ragu; Fresh Farfalle (bow-shaped pasta), Tri-colore (spinach, tomato and egg) with 2 Sauces-eggplant and sausage, and mushrooms

Jan. 26–Roast Chicken Collection: Roast Chicken with Bone Marrow and Mushroom Gravy, "Iberian Chicken" (Garlic Chicken), Curry Roast with Mango Chutney and Indian Pilaf, Roast Butter Chicken in Butter Sauce, Roast Chicken Galantina; side dishes

Call 9289296/ 9273008/ 6335162/ 0917-8399888.

FOOD for the Gods

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Sure you're ready to have your temperatures raised?
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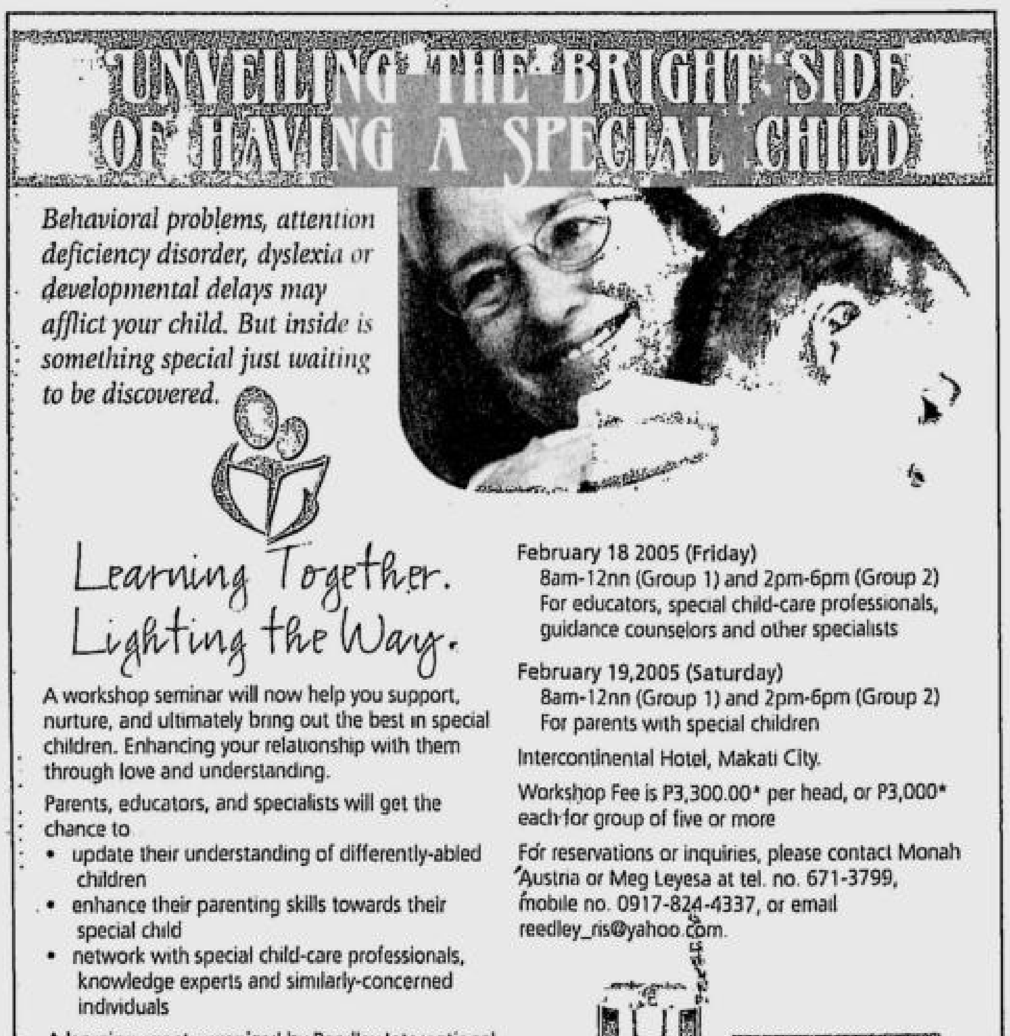

UNVEILING THE BRIGHT SIDE OF HAVING A SPECIAL CHILD

Behavioral problems, attention deficiency disorder, dyslexia or developmental delays may afflict your child. But inside is something special just waiting to be discovered.

Learning Together. Lighting the Way.

A workshop seminar will now help you support, nurture, and ultimately bring out the best in special children. Enhancing your relationship with them through love and understanding.

Parents, educators, and specialists will get the chance to
- update their understanding of differently-abled children
- enhance their parenting skills towards their special child
- network with special child-care professionals, knowledge experts and similarly-concerned individuals

A learning event organized by Reedley International School, Philippines, in alliance with Genesis School for Special Education, Singapore.

Keynote speaker: **MS. LISA BARRON**, Principal Genesis School.

February 18 2005 (Friday)
8am-12nn (Group 1) and 2pm-6pm (Group 2)
For educators, special child-care professionals, guidance counselors and other specialists

February 19,2005 (Saturday)
8am-12nn (Group 1) and 2pm-6pm (Group 2)
For parents with special children

Intercontinental Hotel, Makati City.

Workshop Fee is P3,300.00* per head, or P3,000* each for group of five or more

For reservations or inquiries, please contact Monah Austria or Meg Leyesa at tel. no. 671-3799, mobile no. 0917-824-4337, or email reedley_ris@yahoo.com.

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Lost 26 lbs.
on his programme.
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FOREARMS
5 - 10 cm
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20 - 50 cm
INCH

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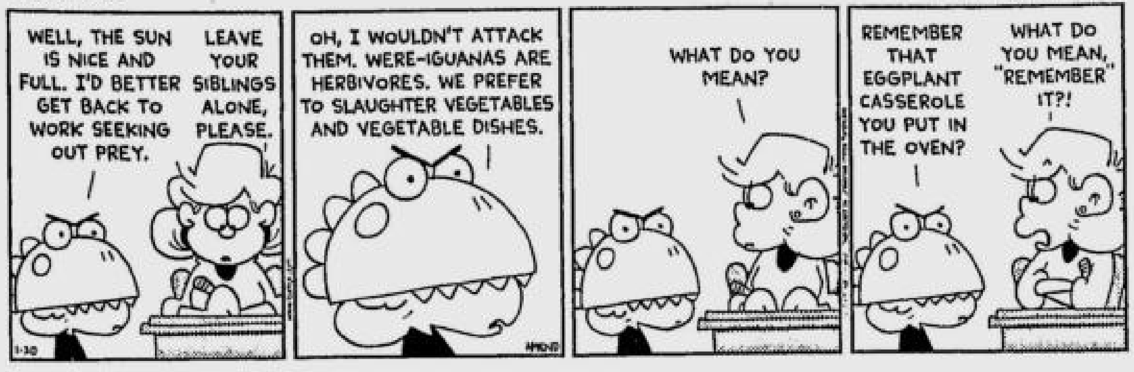
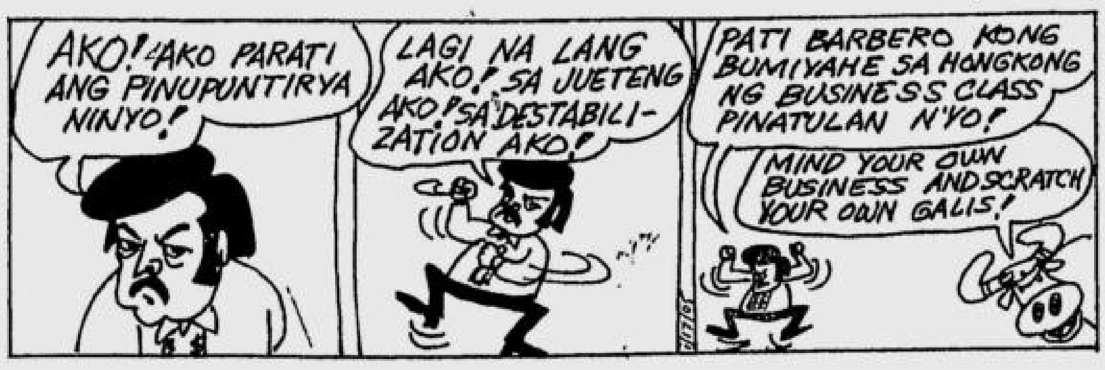
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

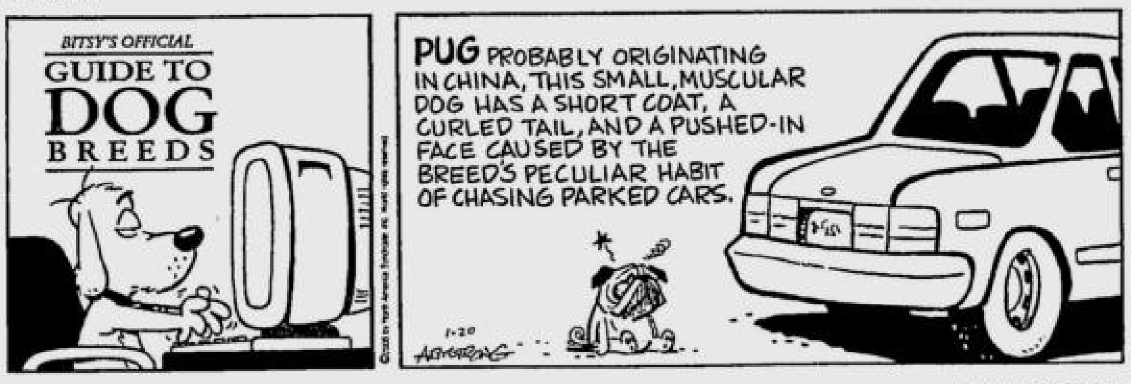
FOXTROT BY BILL AMEND


WELL, THE SUN IS NICE AND FULL. I'D BETTER GET BACK TO WORK SEEKING OUT PREY.
LEAVE YOUR SIBLINGS ALONE, PLEASE.
OH, I WOULDN'T ATTACK THEM. WERE-IGUANAS ARE HERBIVORES. WE PREFER TO SLAUGHTER VEGETABLES AND VEGETABLE DISHES.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
REMEMBER THAT EGGPLANT CASSEROLE YOU PUT IN THE OVEN?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "REMEMBER" IT?!
1-20
AMEND

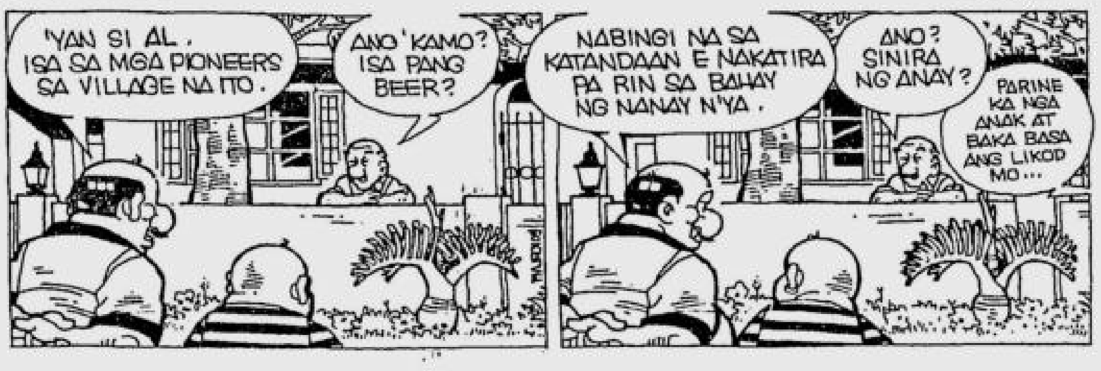
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


AKO! ¿AKO PARATI ANG PINUPUNTIRYA NINYO!
LAGI NA LANG AKO! SA JUETENG AKO! SA DESTABILIZATION AKO!
PATI BARBERO KONG BUMIYAHE SA HONGKONG NG BUSINESS CLASS PINATULAN N'YO!
MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS AND SCRATCH YOUR OWN GALIS!

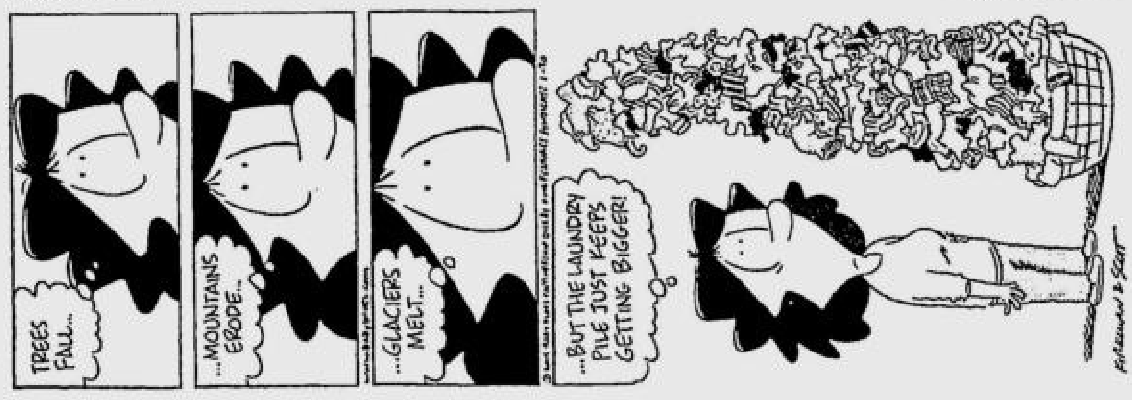
MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG


BITSY'S OFFICIAL GUIDE TO DOG BREEDS
PUG PROBABLY ORIGINATING IN CHINA, THIS SMALL, MUSCULAR DOG HAS A SHORT COAT, A CURLED TAIL, AND A PUSHED-IN FACE CAUSED BY THE BREED'S PECULIAR HABIT OF CHASING PARKED CARS.
1-20
ARMSTRONG

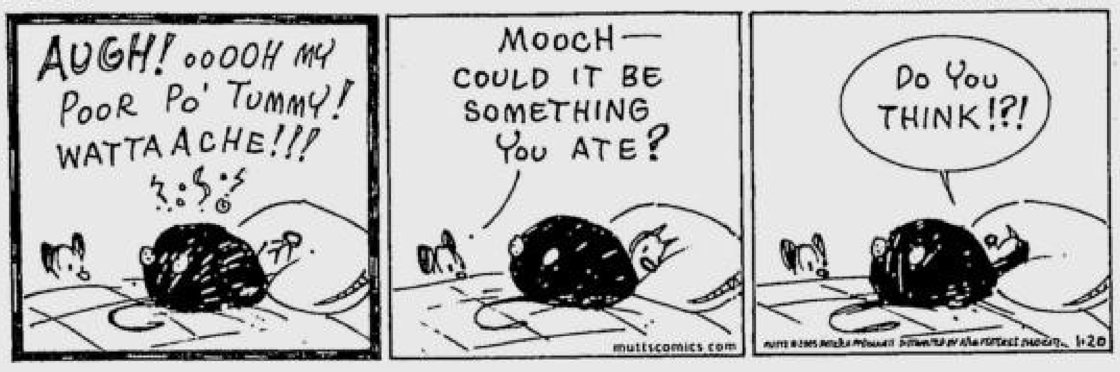
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


'YAN SI AL. ISA SA MGA PIONEERS SA VILLAGE NA ITO.
ANO 'KAMO? ISA PANG BEER?
NABINGI NA SA KATANDAAN E NAKATIRA PA RIN SA BAHAY NG NANAY N'YA.
ANO? SINIRA NG ANAY?
PARINE KA NGA ANAK AT BAKA BASA ANG LIKOD MO...

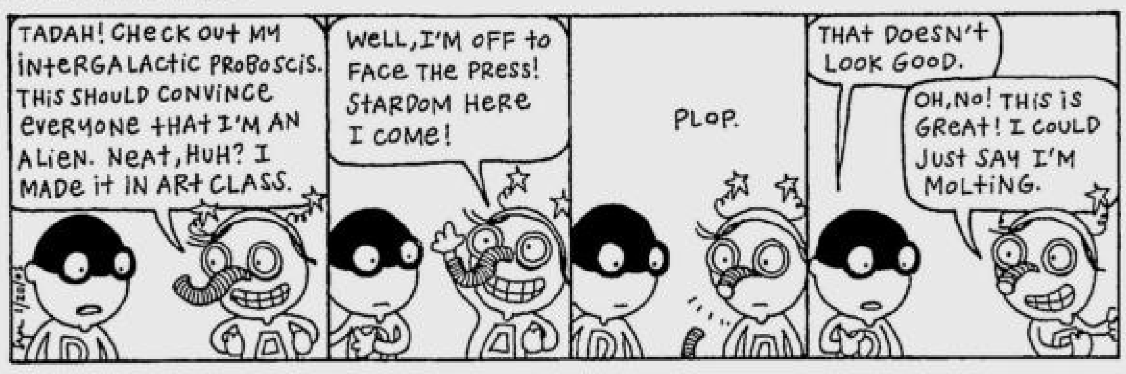
BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


TREES FALL...
...MOUNTAINS ERODE...
...GLACIERS MELT...
...BUT THE LAUNDRY PILE JUST KEEPS GETTING BIGGER!
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

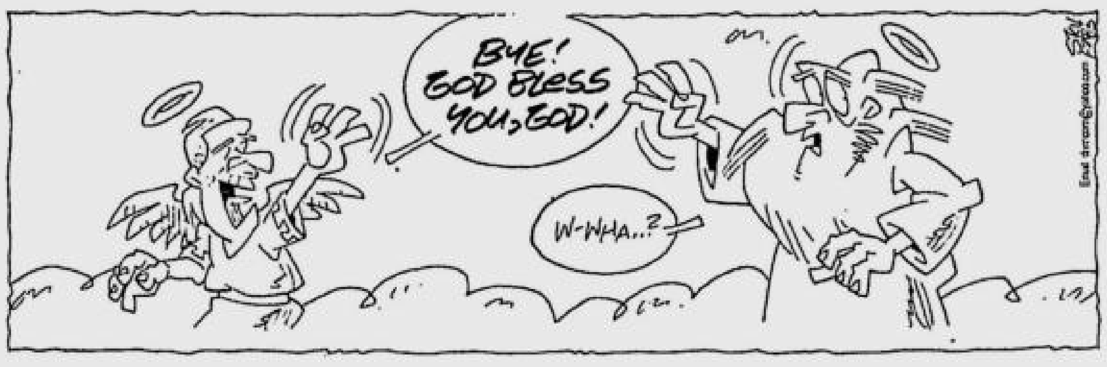
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


AUGH! OOOOH MY POOR PO' TUMMY! WATTA ACHE!!!
MOOCH — COULD IT BE SOMETHING YOU ATE?
DO YOU THINK!?!
muttscomics.com
1-20

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


TADAH! CHECK OUT MY INTERGALACTIC PROBOSCIS. THIS SHOULD CONVINCE EVERYONE THAT I'M AN ALIEN. NEAT, HUH? I MADE IT IN ART CLASS.
WELL, I'M OFF TO FACE THE PRESS! STARDOM HERE I COME!
PLOP.
THAT DOESN'T LOOK GOOD.
OH, NO! THIS IS GREAT! I COULD JUST SAY I'M MOLTING.

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


BYE! GOD BLESS YOU, GOD!
W-WHA..?

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You are emotionally warm, bighearted and pleasantly impulsive. It's nothing extreme; it's just your natural style. You can make fast decisions. And you're resourceful in terms of improvising when things unexpectedly change. You have a deeply human quality that endears you to others. The year ahead is full of exciting new beginnings. Bon voyage!
Birthdate of: Federico Fellini, director; Bill Maher, comedian; Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin. astronaut.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You won't regret putting energy into your home and family scene now. This is exactly what you should do. You must establish a firm foundation for yourself.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Residential moves and job changes are inevitable. For some of you, however, those changes have already taken place. For others, it will happen in 2005.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You have to decide what to keep and what to give away. You're focused on your possessions now. Don't hold on to things for no reason other than habit.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Some of you might feel stiff in your joints. If so, there's a very good chance you'll feel much better at the end of this year. (

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You definitely have to streamline your life in some way. Be prepared to get rid of things and move on. A whole world will open up to you later this year and next.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): This continues to be a strong time where you see where your success is and you see what is no longer worthwhile. If it isn't working, drop it.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): This is definitely a time of graduation or culmination in your life. Wherever you work hard, you will now see your payoff. This is a time of harvest.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Don't hesitate to be optimistic about your future. The best is yet to come. Toward the end of this year, your accomplishments will be evident to everyone.

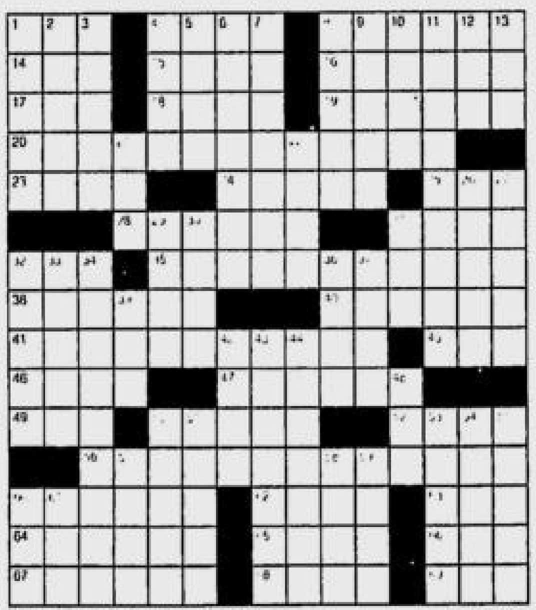
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): For the past two years, you've been getting along with less support from external sources. By the end of this year, this drain is over. Courage!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): In many ways, the next 14 years of your life will be very eventful. The past 15 years were a preparation for what is taking place now.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): All your hard work is starting to pay off. Be patient. By the end of this year, you'll be out of the gate and running!

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You're giving a lot of thought to your career lately. You want to find work that is meaningful, enjoyable and profitable. You can do this!

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Bruce Venzke & Stella Daily 1/20/05
Madison, WI

ACROSS
1 Flagon filler
4 Curmudgeon
8 Very erotic
14 Poseidon's domain
15 Prefix with dyne or drome
16 Rang out
17 Cool dude
18 Prego rival
19 Showery months
20 Start of a quip
23 Arsonist, for short
24 Snooped
25 Charlton Heston's org.
28 "Up!" singer Twain
31 Let's go!
32 Ninnyhammer
35 Part 2 of quip
38 Frees from suspicion
40 Pelt processor
41 Part 3 of quip
45 Attempt
46 Kett of comics
47 Morality enforcer
49 Visualize
50 How some stocks sell
52 Cosby/Culp TV series
56 End of quip
60 Wife of 60D and 61D
62 Ship part
63 Author Rand
64 Without coercion
65 French state
66 Hanoi holiday
67 Letter X's
68 Collection biz
69 Period

DOWN
1 Songwriters' org.
2 Vermont Senator Patrick
3 Diner
4 Complain
5 Raise
6 WWI battle site
7 Lady's room
8 Room
9 Not so hot
10 Pull down
11 Front-end procedure
12 Director Brooks
13 Gridiron meas.
21 ID's on jerseys
22 Letters on B-52's
26 Jolly pirate?
27 Steamed
29 Angel's prop
30 Church part
31 10-pack of cigarettes
32 Sore points
33 Roofing material
34 Old Roman coins
36 List-ending abbrevs.
37 Stoic philosopher
39 Rte. advisor
42 Proof of purchase: abbr.
43 Piece of plumage
44 Along the way
48 The Cars singer Ocasek
50 Light on one's feet
51 Bridge teams
53 Emulate Tara Lipinski
54 Tradesman
55 Gossipy woman
57 Turner and Clanton
58 Unit of thunder?
59 Sax for Bird
60 See 60A
61 See 60A

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

S	C	A	M	P		L	I	S	P		B	E	S	T
E	R	N	I	E		A	N	T	S		A	G	I	O
C	U	K	O	R	M	Y	F	A	I	R	L	A	D	Y
T	F	A			A	M	O	N		A	E	D	E	S
			H	A	G	A		D	I	R	E			
C	A	M	E	R	O	N	T	I	T	A	N	I	C	
I	C	E	B	A	G		U	N	C			L	I	N
S	U	D	A	N		A	R	S		P	R	O	V	O
T	R	A			O	B	I		B	E	A	N	I	E
	A	L	L	E	N	A	N	N	I	E	H	A	L	L
			I	R	O	N		O	O	P	S			
A	L	I	B	I		D	I	R	T			O	H	O
L	E	V	I	N	S	O	N	R	A	I	N	M	A	N
M	E	A	D		A	N	T	I		D	O	R	I	C
A	R	N	O		O	S	I	S		A	N	I	L	E

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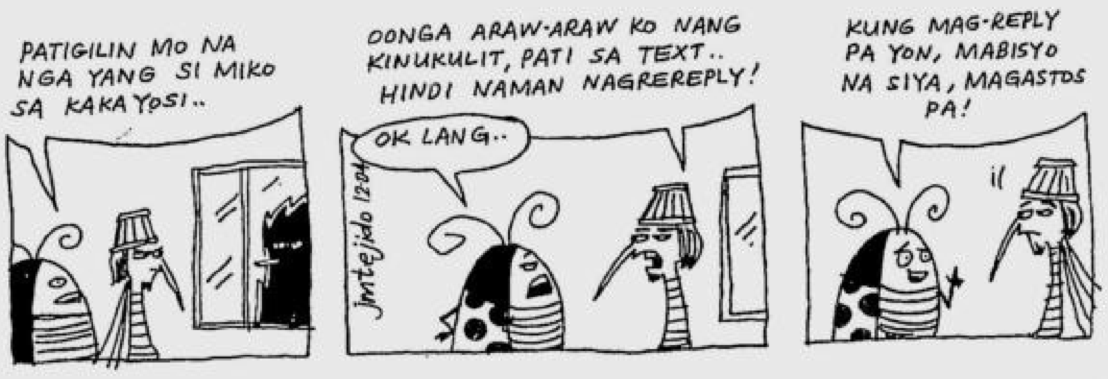
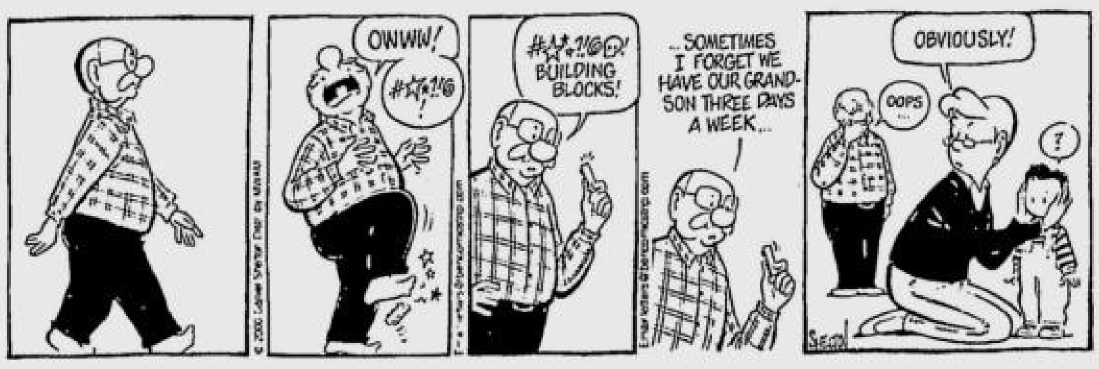
1/20/05

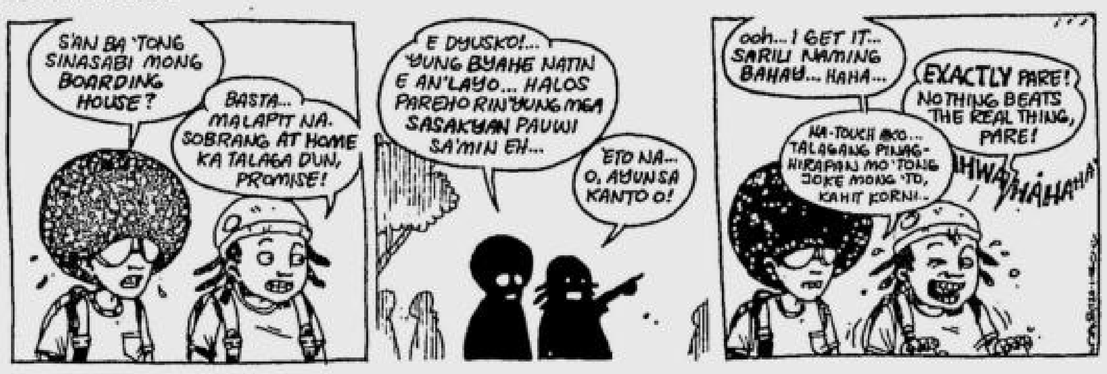
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


PATIGILIN MO NA NGA YANG SI MIKO SA KAKAYOSI..
OONGA ARAW-ARAW KO NANG KINUKULIT, PATI SA TEXT.. HINDI NAMAN NAGREREPLY!
OK LANG..
KUNG MAG-REPLY PA YON, MABISYO NA SIYA, MAGASTOS PA!
jmtejido 12.04

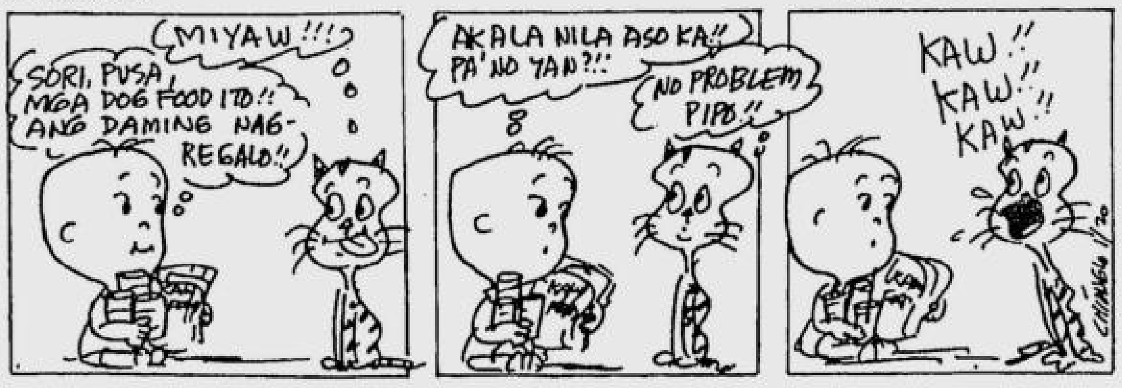
BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


OWWW!
#☆!%
#☆*!%@! BUILDING BLOCKS!
...SOMETIMES I FORGET WE HAVE OUR GRANDSON THREE DAYS A WEEK...
OOPS
OBVIOUSLY!
?

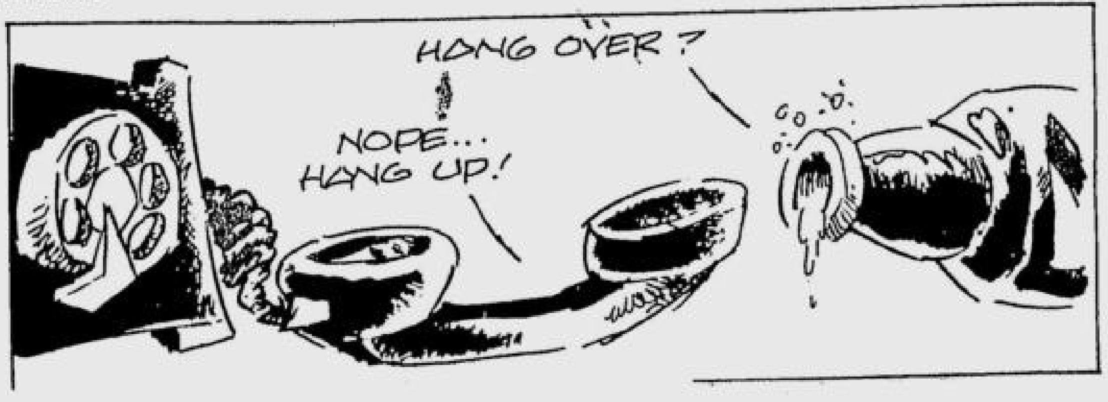
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


S'AN BA 'TONG SINASABI MONG BOARDING HOUSE?
BASTA... MALAPIT NA. SOBRANG AT HOME KA TALAGA DUN, PROMISE!
E DYUSKO!... 'YUNG BYAHE NATIN E AN'LAYO... HALOS PAREHO RIN 'YUNG MGA SASAKYAN PAUWI SA'MIN EH...
ETO NA... O, AYUN SA KANTO O!
ooh... I GET IT... SARILI NAMING BAHAY... HAHA...
EXACTLY PARE! NOTHING BEATS THE REAL THING, PARE!
NA-TOUCH AKO... TALAGANG PINAG-HIRAPAN MO 'TONG JOKE MONG 'TO, KAHIT KORNI..
HWAHAHAHA

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


MIYAW!!!
SORI, PUSA, MGA DOG FOOD ITO!! ANG DAMING NAG-REGALO!!
AKALA NILA ASO KA!! PA'NO YAN?!!
NO PROBLEM PIPO!!
KAW!! KAW!! KAW!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


HANG OVER?
NOPE... HANG UP!

What is best protection against virus attack?

THE CONSUMER

Marietta Velasco Giron

THANKS to all the good guys who sent interesting letters after reading how our computer crashed because of a virus. We are sharing the following letters with helpful information.

In his e-mail, Dr. Edmund Martinez (edmundm@tri-isys.com) cited the benefits he got when he switched from a Windows-based personal computer to an Apple laptop with the Mac Operating System X. Like us, he had been using a home computer with anti-virus protection until 10 years later when it was attacked by a virus.

Needless to say, the virus destroyed all his stored data containing teaching materials and medical files.

With his computer now, he said he did not have to spend a third to half of his precious time worrying about virus attacks and spyware invasion. Consider switching, he advised, adding, "there is already a Filipino online community of Macintosh users (find out more at www.pinoymac.org and www.philumg.ph)."

The other letter was sent by bernie.janda@gmail.com. According to him, the Wintel system (Windows on Intel platform) was very vulnerable to viruses. Your only defense, he explained, was to make sure that all your anti-virus programs were current and were updated at least once a week.

He wrote further: "Install a personal firewall and an AD (advertisement) blocker. With all these additional programs running in the background, also make sure that you add RAM to your computer because all these additional programs use valuable RAM (Random Access Memory) and slow down computers."

Bernie recommended the Apple Macintosh computer. For consumers who find the brand expensive, he offered another option: "Give Linux a try. As with the Mac, programs available for Windows have their Linux counterpart, and most of them are free."

To understand more about the technical side, we requested journalist and IT expert A. Lee (albert.theone@gmail.com) to add his comments. He wrote: "Bernie Janda's advice is good and proper, although sometimes it can become a headache tying to keep track of protection updates, but I guess it comes with the territory—it's like you can't have wide open windows for air to circulate freely in the house without the risk of burglary."

Lee commented, "It does require some vigilance and effort to keep out would-be attackers. (But) the Mac is not completely immune from virus attacks, either. So, even if you're free of Windows virus threats, there are thousands of Mac mal-ware to guard against, just the same."

On the Linux switch, he pointed out that getting its system up and running might cost less than Windows or Macintosh, but it had indirect costs, too.

And we agree with Lee. Linux may be getting more user-friendly by the day, but for now, it is more for the technically-inclined.

For that matter, we ordinary computer users, who are not savvy enough on technical things, will stay comfortable with popular, easy-to-use (but, unfortunately, also easy-to-hack) systems like Windows and Macintosh.

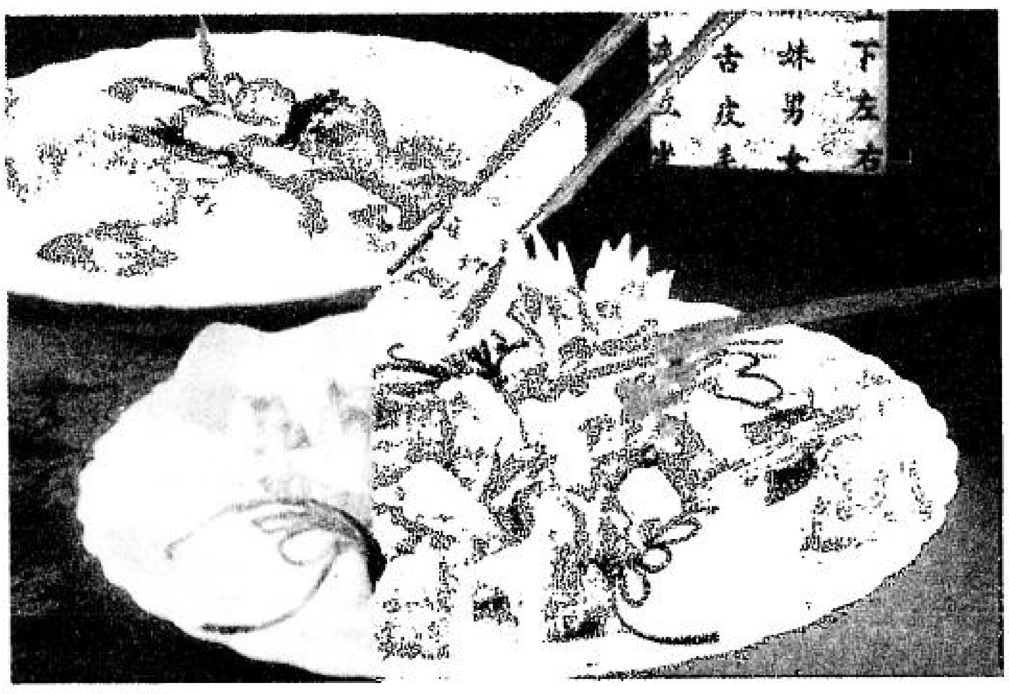
It happens to everyone

Fr. Didoy Molina (didoymolina@yahoo.com) of St. Joseph Parish in Las Piñas City related the following experience to remind readers that valuables should not be left unguarded in public places.

He and his friend lost a cellular phone and money while they were at Lagos del Sol resort in Caliraya, Laguna, to look at the amenities of the place for seminars, conventions, and retreats for parishioners and students.

Father Didoy recalled, "We unfortunately left the bag (containing my cell phone and my friend's wallet) on one of the tables in the reception area. After some frantic moments of searching, the bag was found on the floating dock a few meters away from the reception area. The bag was open and nowhere was my Nokia 6600 cell phone, as well as my friend's wallet containing P10,000."

E-mail the author at mariettagiron@hotmail.com.



TASTING Japanese at Holiday Inn Galleria Manila

Low carb, high-flavored dishes

DINING OUT

TGI FRIDAY'S introduces low carb, high-flavored favorites. Grilled Salmon Fillet is char-grilled and topped with fresh tomatoes then served with a side of garlic buttered green beans and lemon wedge. Friday's Half-Roasted Chicken blends butter and herbs and served with a side of garlic buttered green beans and lemon wedge. Buffalo Chicken Salad if grilled buffalo glaze chicken breast served over crisp Romaine topped with Colby cheese and jalapeno bleu cheese dressing. These low carb favorites are available at TGI Friday's branches in Glorietta 3, Robinsons Manila, Hotel Rembrandt-QC, Sta. Lucia East and Alabang Town Center.

HOLIDAY INN Galleria Manila's Raphael Café and Restaurant features Tasting Japanese until Jan. 22. Presented are the tempura corner, temaki and okonomi sushi stations, Japanese salads, suimono and other delicacies. Call 6337111.

THE BELLEVUE Hotel's Cafe D'Asie presents its Steak Promo until Jan. 31. Offered are Minute Steak Strindberg, Sirloin Steak Mirabeau, US Rib-eye Steak, US Beef Cutlet and Paillard of Beef. Call 7718181.

WESTGATE Center features food establishments Go Nuts Donuts, Poquito Mas, Lanai Red, UCC Coffee, Cafe Adriatico and Cafe Breton. Westgate Center is located at Commerce Ave. cor. Filinvest Ave., Filinvest Corporate City, Alabang, Muntinlupa. Call 8095428/ 8076729.

FISHING Village Restaurant offers Cantonese dishes like Steamed Sea Bass with Preserved Vegetables and Kum Kee Seeds, Stuffed Abalone with Broccoli Flowers and Fish Rolls. Fishing Village is located along Roxas Boulevard corner Padre Faura, Manila. Call 5368838/ 5361916.

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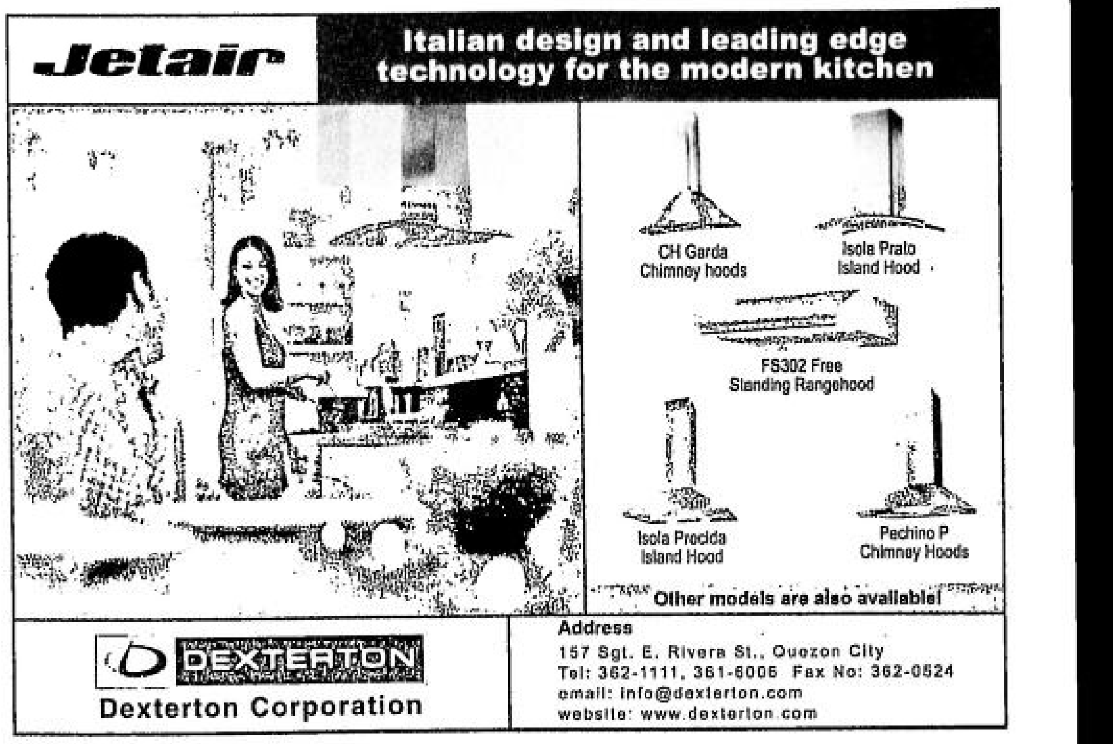
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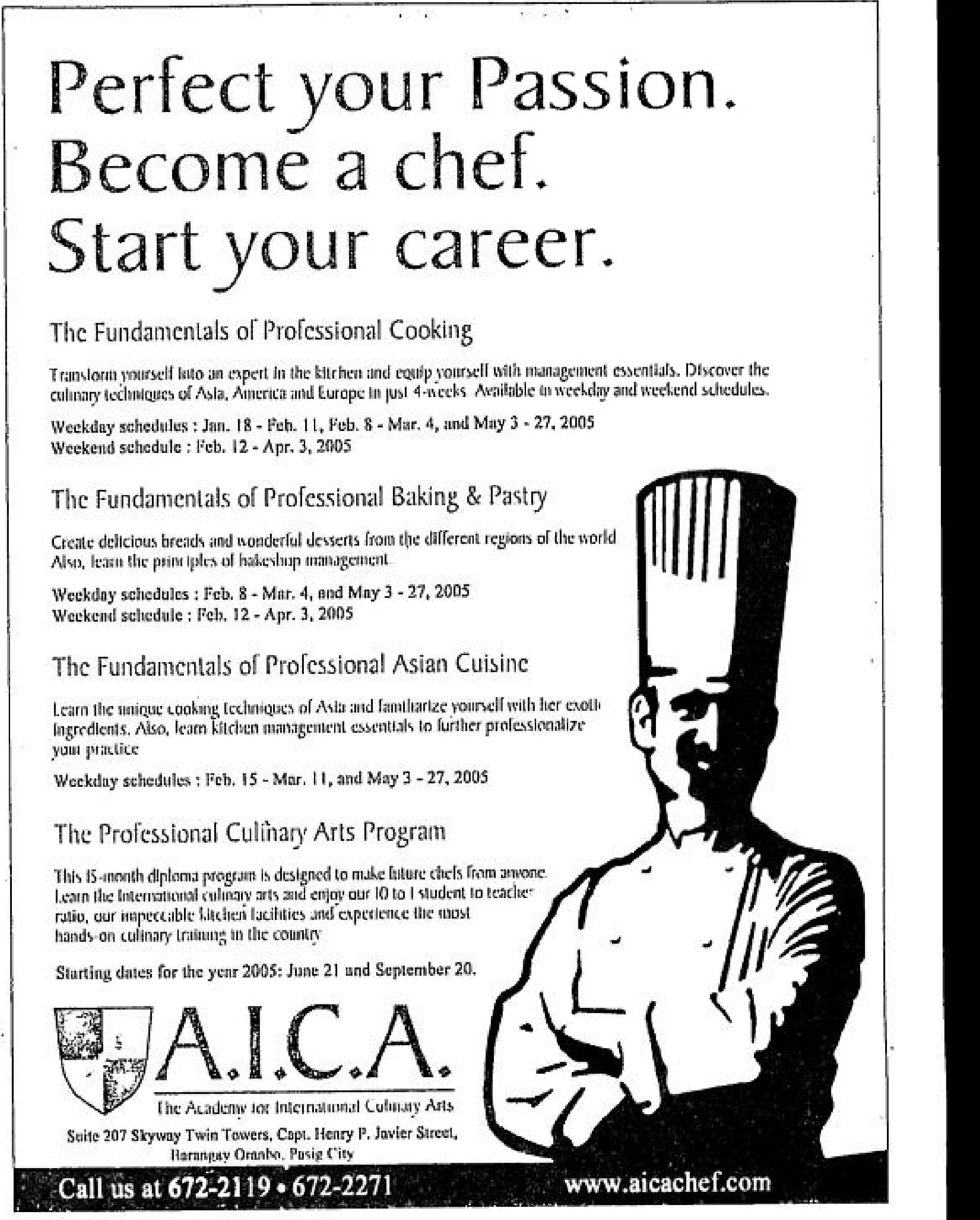
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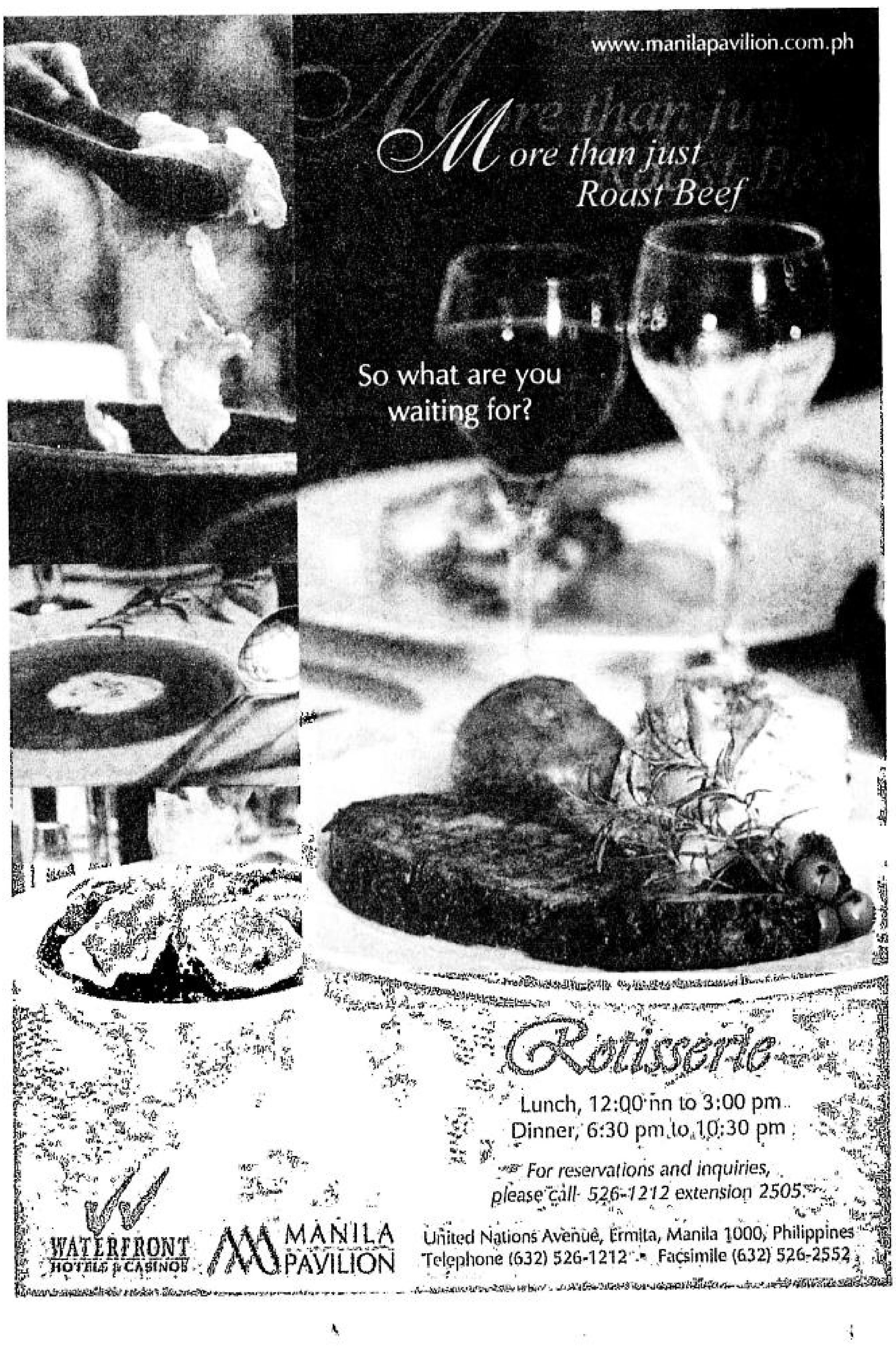
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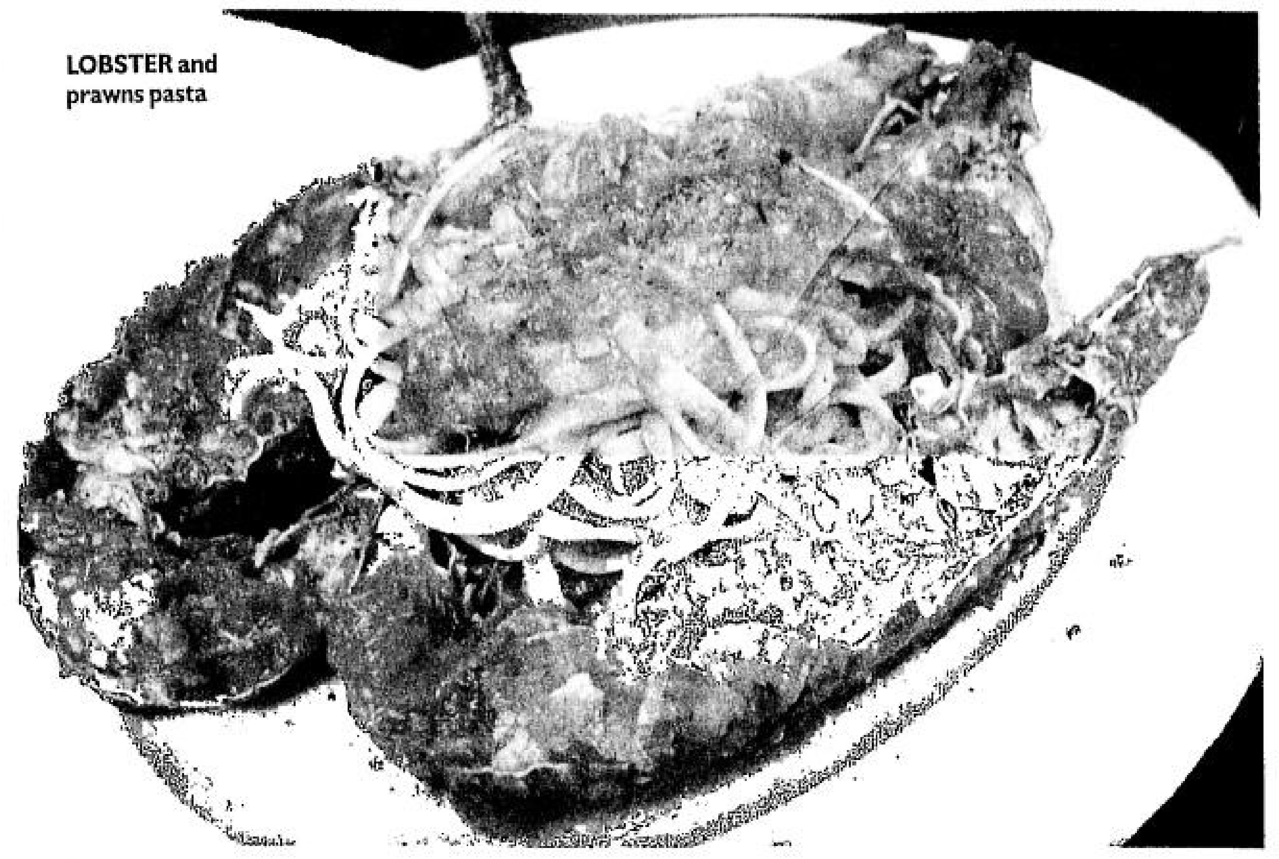


LOBSTER and prawns pasta

As heady as nicotine

Text and photos by Linda B. Bolido

THE NAME may seem like a smoker's way of thumbing his nose at authorities who want a relatively nicotine-free air in Metro Manila. But though a pack of cigarettes and a lighter is constantly within arm's reach, Richard Tann's restaurant was not named after the tobacco's main component.

A broad-leafed ornamental cousin of the tobacco that looks like a member of the bulb or ginger family has been a familiar backdrop in many events Tann produced. He never knew its name until floral arranger Toni Parsons told him it was called nicotina (also called nicotiana).

Tann liked it, thinking it would imply that the place was welcoming of both smokers and non-smokers alike.

More than a restaurant

Opened in July, the Nicotina Garden Pavilion on Roxas Boulevard in Pasay City is a *trattoria*, an auditorium and a showroom. It is a place for families to bond on weekends, for music lovers to listen to good, solid performances on certain days, and for staging events from weddings to art exhibits. It was even the venue for a poetry reading once.

The food, as *trattorias* go, is simple, flavorful home-cooking like you would get at a small family-owned eatery in Italy where the *patron* is often also the chef and head waiter while the rest of the family handle all the other odd jobs.

Rates are also affordable. A filling lunch can be had for P200 or less per person; dinner costs a bit more. For families and *barkada*, there are the half meter-and meter-long pizza to share at P800 and P1,400, respectively. Cut into squares, the half meter-long pizza serves 4-6 while the meter-long will feed a group of 6-10.

With both Japanese and Italian partners in this brand-new adventure (Inno Sotto, the renowned fashion designer, is also part of the group), Tann's first foray into the food business could have gone either way. But finding a recently "idled" Italian chef made the partners opt for a *trattoria*.

After the first few months, chef Luca Magnini handed over Nicotina's kitchen to Restie Rubio, and is now acting only as a consultant. Rubio's credentials include stints at Grappa and L'Opera.

Right now, Tann says he has 17-18 people in the kitchen and as service crew.

Though the food draws a growing number of "loyalists," the other half of Nicotina's name, Garden Pavilion, makes the place more than just another Italian restaurant. Drawing on his years of experience as an events organizer, and with artistic input from Sotto, Tann has created a fluid space where there are no defined boundaries between outdoor and indoor.

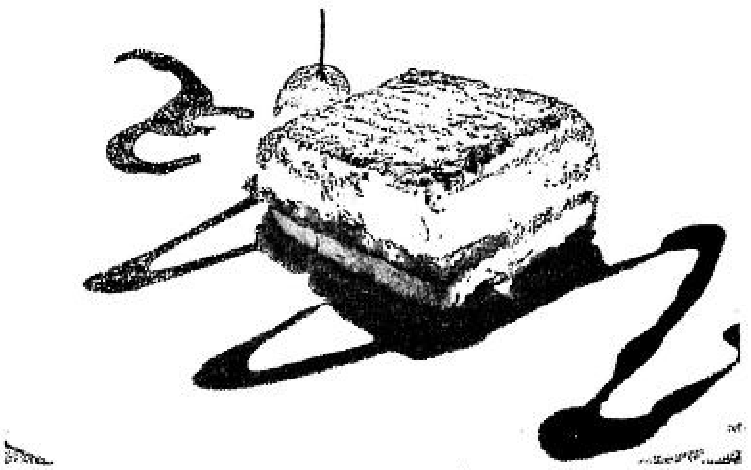
Garden feeling

Palm fronds are scattered over the fiberglass roof to temper the sun's heat and glare. Ringed with trees and ornamentals, the high-ceilinged pavilion is separated from the garden only by panels of *talahib* stalks that do not completely enclose the structure. Bamboo screens can be drawn up and down when needed. Dividers of *sawali* from Subic and *talahib* stalks convert one end of the hall into a private function room.

It is hard to kick the Nicotina habit when the resto offers simple but good cooking, innovative use of space and a prudent mix of indoor and outdoor

SINGER, events organizer and now restaurant owner Richard Tann welcomes food and music lovers. MANDY NAVASERO

SPINACH, instead of lettuce, is used in Nicotina's Chef's Salad.



THOUGH Tann admits the dessert lineup can be improved, the gelato cake is a good way to end a meal.

A FLUID design without defined boundaries, high ceilings and a lavish use of ornamentals give diners a feel of dining al fresco. MANDY NAVASERO

Furniture consists of rattan and bamboo pieces collected from Tann's trips to neighboring Pagsanjan and Paete in Laguna. The floor consists of *piedra Filipina* from places near Vigan, Ilocos Sur.

Strategically placed throughout the hall, giving the impression that the garden has been brought inside, are potted ornamentals. At the moment, they are mainly palms. Next month, when the pavilion goes "pink" for Valentine, Tann plans to bring in potted ficus in lieu of the palms.

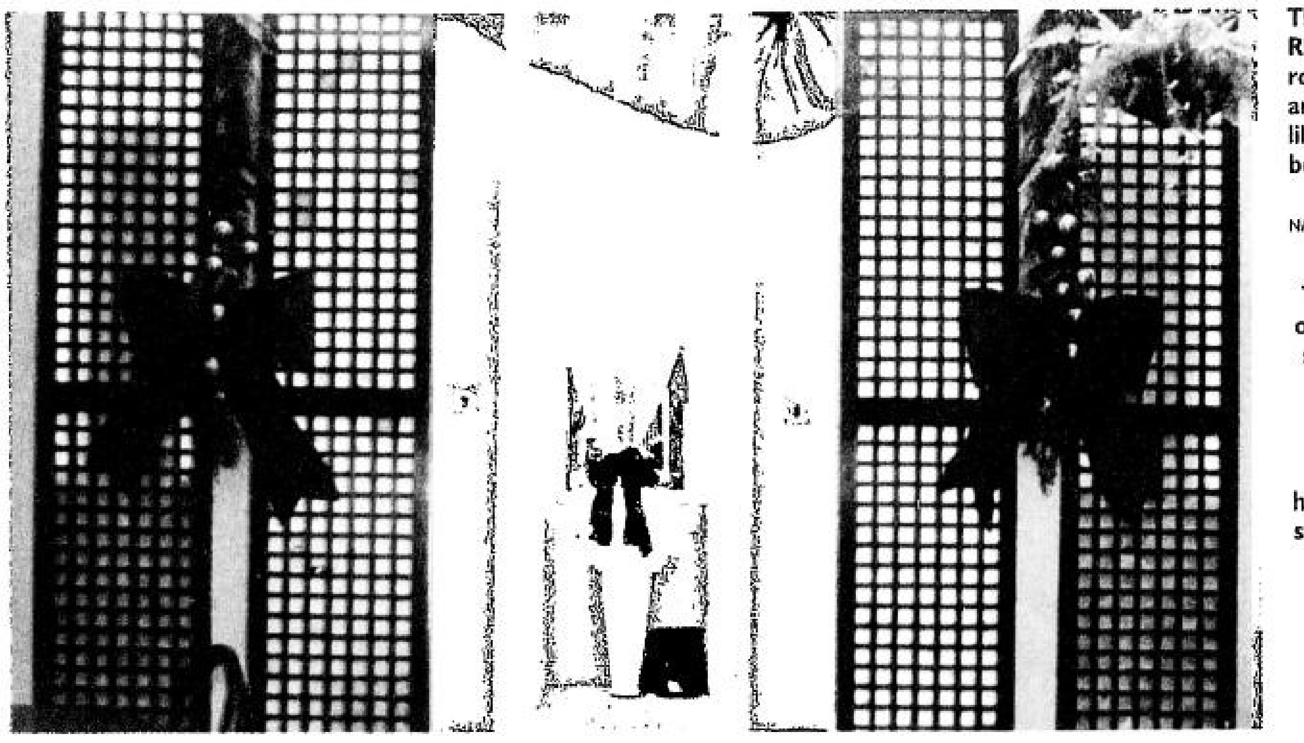
The open and fluid design and the plants inside and outside make the place "environment-friendly" for both smokers and non-smokers, Tann says.

Expanding the menu

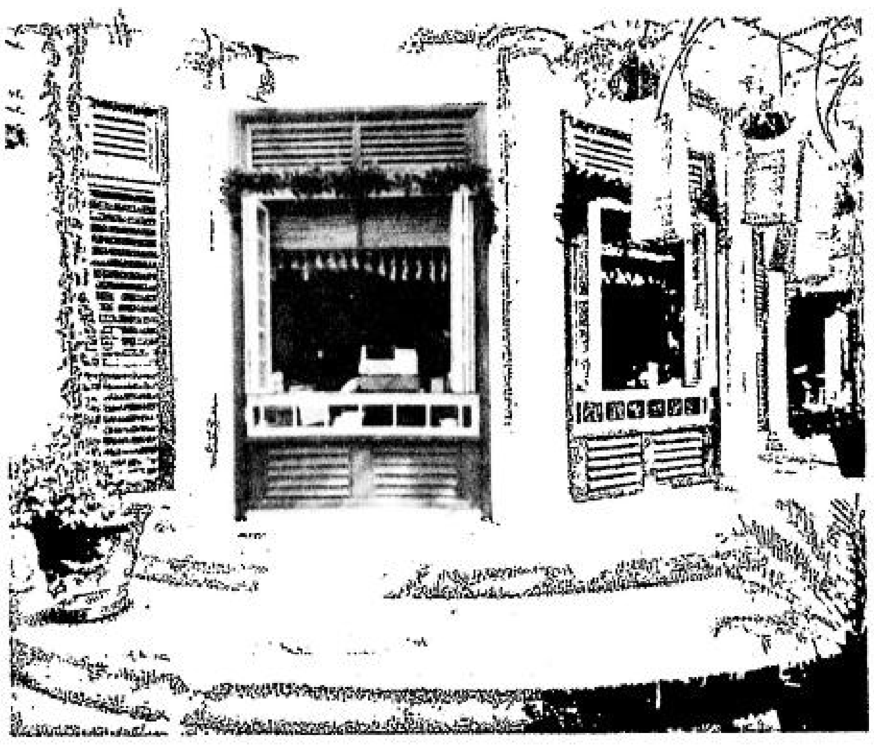
Though its Italian menu seems to be enough of a draw, Tann, thinking of events that Nicotina may be hosting like weddings, birthdays and the like, says they are considering adding some Filipino dishes as well.

At the moment though, Tann's mind is focused on next month when he will have, among others, a mini-reunion of sorts with former Circus Band colleagues Pat Castillo and Jackie Magno for a two-evening show, Feb. 13-14; and a dog fashion show. Well-known pastry chef Heny Sison is helping draw up a special Valentine menu for February and will also help strengthen Nicotina's dessert line, which Tann admits can stand some improvement.

Nicotina, located next to the Department of Foreign Affairs in Pasay City, is open 11:30 a.m.-11:30 p.m. weekdays, and 11:30-2 a.m. weekends. Call 5517906/07.



THE REST rooms are done like gift boxes. MANDY NAVASERO



THE BAR occupies a section of the ground floor of the old house that still stands on the property leased by Nicotina. MANDY NAVASERO

THURSDAY, JANUARY 20, 2005

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Empowering fairy tale

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor

REVIEW

FOLK tales and pop culture have had their share of brave and resilient young heroes, from Hansel and Gretel to Macaulay Culkin's character Kevin in the "Home Alone" movies. Icons like Harry Potter, Buffy, Spider-Man, Luke Skywalker and other similar figures touched by tragedy have had to embrace their problematic destinies with little or no adult supervision.

The best-selling "Lemony Snicket" series of children's books is now a movie, and it features a trio of siblings, the Baudelaires, fresh off of a very traumatic event: Their parents perished in a mysterious fire that razed their mansion.

Definitely not a typical way to start a story aimed at youngsters, but it does get everyone's attention. Lemony Snicket, a narrator perpetually cloaked in shadow and voiced by Jude Law, tells the story in a most unconventional manner: He repeatedly begs and warns readers of his report (or in this particular case, the movie audience) to proceed with caution, as it may get too intense for both children and adults.

The three Baudelaire kids—Violet (Emily Browning), Klaus (Liam Aiken) and Sunny (toddler twins Kara and Shelby Hoffman sharing the same role—didn't have time to grieve, as they were soon shuttled off to their new guardian. This suspicious new "relative," Count Olaf (Jim Carrey), who lives in a big but terribly unkempt house, pretends to welcome them with open arms.

It is pretty obvious to them from the outset, however, that he is just after their huge inheritance.

Tim Burton world

Count Olaf treats the children like dirt when other adults are not looking. He doesn't even hide his dislike for them, or his actual nastiness, which sends the siblings trying their darnedest to tell the often-ignorant adults of their horrid predicament.

And yes, it gets intense quite quickly. The malevolent Count actually tries to kill them! But the kids aren't without their gifts and talents. Violet has a knack for inventing things, Klaus is very well-read, and Sunny has, well, very strong teeth that can be very useful in certain circumstances!

They try to outwit their tormentor and every possible threat they encounter and, just like in many fairy tales, barely survive a long string of unfortunate events.

"Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events" nicely presents an oddly dismal but empowering fairy tale, set in a surreal, Tim Burton-esque world that merges visual elements from disparate eras and fantastic realms. The film, directed by Brad Silberling from a screenplay by Robert Gordon ("Men in Black II"), compresses three books from the popular series by Daniel Handler.

The protagonists, constantly thrown out of their element, are smart, adaptive characters that kids may identify with because, in reality, children are left to fend for themselves in school. They're bred for flexibility, since the outside world can get very competitive, if not downright harsh, as the children grow older. These nerdy heroes are underdogs who trounce whatever challenges they face, and their adventures subtly underscore the importance of values like teamwork and determination.

The cast collectively delivers inspired performances. Carrey portrays the frustrated theater actor Count Olaf as a character itching to be popular. He's able to put to good use his rubber-like facial expressions here; it's almost as if he's parodying his old portrayals of Ace Ventura, the Mask and the Grinch. But it works consistently in his performance as evil incarnate.

Carrey's wild, comedic persona is still intact after his sublime subtle work in "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind."

Rare feat

Meryl Streep doesn't disappoint either with her turn as a grammar-obsessed, worrywart widow. This is a refreshing look at the actress, who appears in some of the film's funniest scenes.

Masterfully written and executed, "Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events" successfully caters to young and old viewers alike.

That's a rare feat, given that very few movies made for children don't talk down to either of them. With its prominent mature themes, it should provoke difficult discussions between parents and children about death, loss and survival.

Working really hard and recognizing actual monsters, after all, are crucial to living happily ever after in the real world.

EVIL INCARNATE. Carrey looks like he's parodying his old portrayals of Ace Ventura, the Mask, and the Grinch, but it works.

'Rings' makers to film 'Lovely Bones' novel

JACKSON

LOS ANGELES—Oscar-winning "Lord of the Rings" couple Peter Jackson and Fran Walsh plan to bring the grim saga "The Lovely Bones" to the big screen in 2007 after they have finished "King Kong," Daily Variety reported in its Tuesday edition.

The trade paper said the New Zealanders have reached into their own pockets to option the feature film rights to Alice Sebold's debut novel from Britain's FilmFour movie production company, and will start adapting the screenplay with their "Rings" partner Philippa Boyens next January.

The project will be shopped to studios once the script is finished and Jackson has worked out a budget, Daily Variety said. Jackson will direct and serve as a producer.

"The Lovely Bones," a bestseller published in 2002, is narrated from heaven by a 14-year-old girl who has been raped and murdered, and looks down on the people left behind to deal with the tragedy.

"It's the best kind of fantasy in that it has a lot to say about the real world," Daily Variety quoted Jackson as saying.

"You have an experience when you read the

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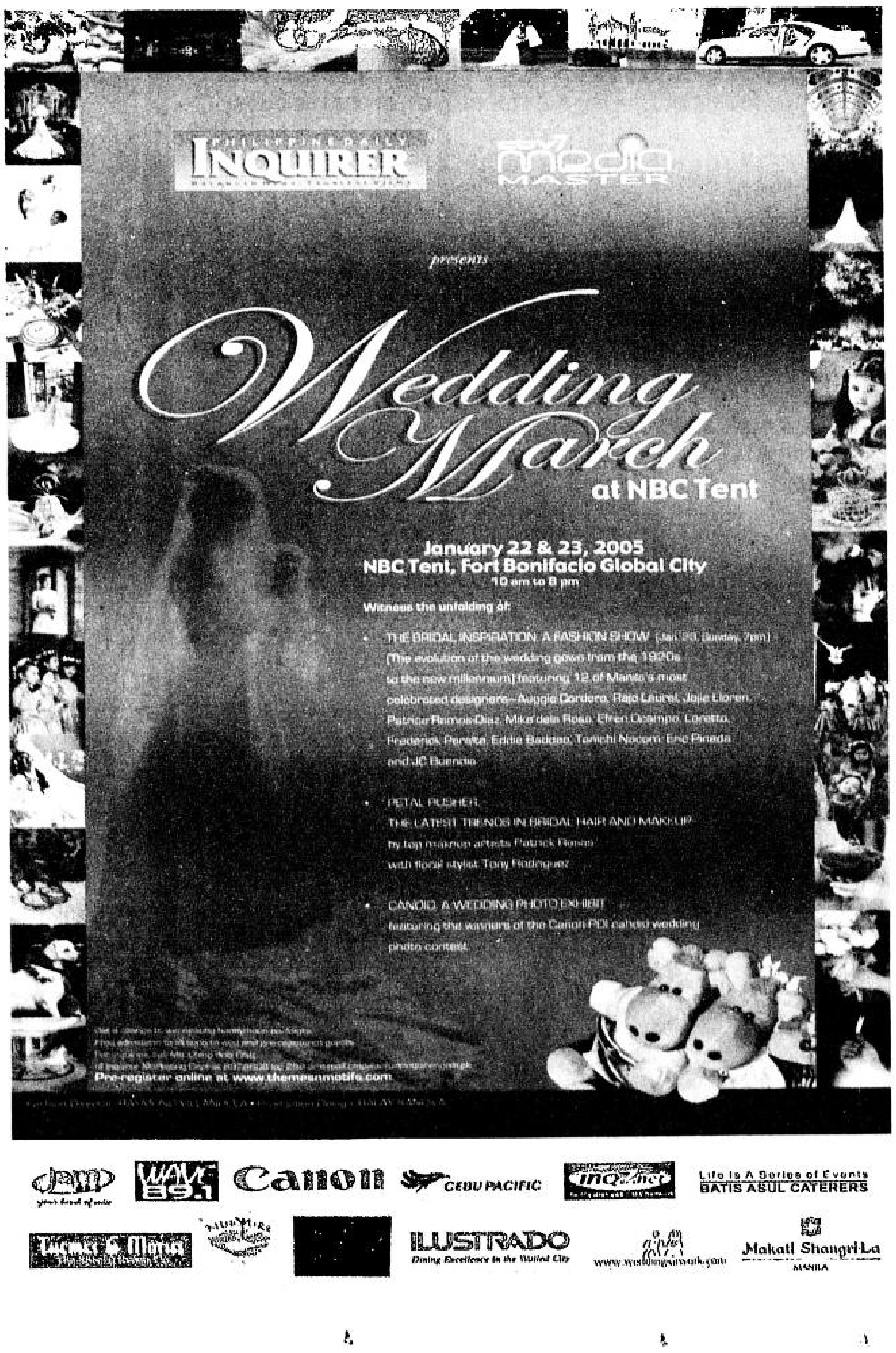

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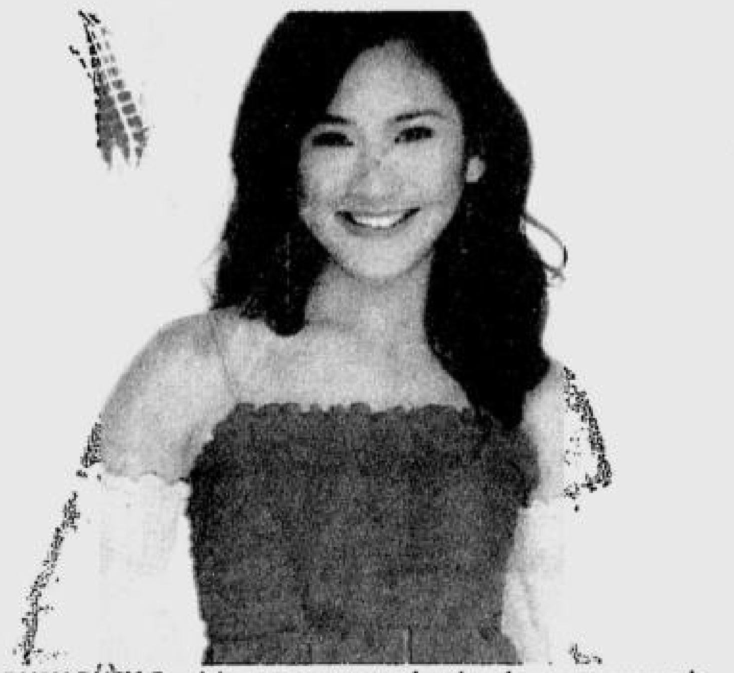

BUSY, BUSY. Sarah has concert tours, hosting chores, a new movie, endorsements

JUST a month after its release, Sarah Geronimo's second album, "Sweet Sixteen" from Viva Records, is already platinum. That means the album has sold more than 30,000 copies in one month.

Sarah is performing in Guam on Jan. 21 to 22 with her old gang from the "Night of the Champions" concert last year: Mark Bautista, Rachelle Ann Go and Christian Bautista. The teen princess is also getting ready to host the "Search for a Star in a Million," ABS-CBN's new nationwide talent search, with Mark, Erik and Christian.

Viva "Boss" Vic del Rosario also announced that Sarah will be the Philippine representative to the Lunar Parade in Los Angeles. Last year it was Regine Velasquez.

In May, the "Night of the Champions" group flies to the US for the "Return of the Champions US Tour 2005." The tour kicks off May 21 in New York, followed by stops in Washington (May 22), Chicago (May 28), San Francisco (June 4), Seattle (June 5), Los Angeles (June 11), Las Vegas (June 12), San Diego (June 17) and Hawaii (June 19).

After the concert tour, she'll be shooting her launching movie, but Boss Vic is keeping the project under wraps. Sarah has also renewed her contract as celebrity endorser for Jollibee, along with Mark.

Fate and good timing

From page 4

"8mm," "Flawless," "Tigerland," "Veronica Guerin" and "Phone Booth," which he shot in a mere 12 days.

"'Phantom' seemed as far from 12 days in a phone booth as I could get," says Schumacher. "I've done so many different genres, but never a musical. It seemed like a huge challenge and I like that."

Schumacher says it was the Phantom characters that initially attracted him to the "extraordinarily cinematic" project in 1988, and drew him back to it once again.

"One of the reasons this tragic love story has been part of our culture since Gaston Leroux wrote his novel is because we identify with the Phantom," he believes. "The Phantom is a physical manifestation of whatever human beings feel is unlovable about themselves. He is a heart-breaking character—much like the hunchback of Notre Dame and the beast in 'Beauty and the Beast'."

The director was also compelled to make the film because "there are millions of people who cannot afford to see Phantom in a legitimate theater, and many people don't live in an area where they can get to a theater where the musical is playing.

"Think about films like 'The Sound of Music,' 'West Side Story' and 'Chicago,'" says the director. "How many people have actually seen 'The Sound of Music' on the stage, compared to the millions who have seen the film? There are people who love Andrew's music, and people who have always wanted to see Phantom onstage, and now they'll have the opportunity to see a version of it."

More insight

In adapting their screenplay from the musical's book, Schumacher and Lloyd Webber delved further into the back stories of several key characters and incorporated the backstage world of the opera house into the main story.

"The stage show concentrates on the Phantom, Christine and Raoul," says Schumacher. "Not only did we want to give the audience more insight as to how each of these characters arrived at the opera house, we also wove the backstage activity—the plasterers, prop makers, wig makers, scenic artists, dancers and singers—into the fabric of the story."

Schumacher attributes his rewarding collaboration with Lloyd Webber to a mutual trust and respect developed over the course of their 15-year friendship.

"We have a very good marriage creatively because I take care of the filming and he takes care of the music," he explains. "Like a lot of very intelligent people, Andrew doesn't pretend to know about things he doesn't. He's an expert on music, so he focused his brilliant talent on the musical aspects of the film, and he gave me an enormous amount of freedom and his full support to create what I thought should be done with the material."

Says Lloyd Webber, "The film looks and sounds fabulous and I think it's an extraordinarily fine document of the stage show. While it doesn't deviate much from the stage material, the film has given it an even deeper emotional center. It's not based on the theater visually or directionwise, but it's still got exactly the same essence. And that's all I could have ever hoped for."

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'Rings' makers to film...

From page A4

book that is unlike any other. I don't want the tone or the mood to be different or lost in the film."

FilmFour, which will develop "Lovely Bones" with Jackson and Walsh, is a unit of UK state-owned commercial broadcaster Channel 4.

Jackson, Walsh and Boyens won Oscars last year for writing "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King," the third installment in their hobbit smash.

The couple also shared the best picture Oscar, while Jackson was honored for directing and Walsh for song.

Their remake of "King Kong," starring Naomi Watts, is set for release in December. *Reuters*

IVY AT THE PEN

"Song festival queen" Ivy Violan returns to the mainstream concert scene with the Valentine show "My Heart's Love," on Feb. 14 at 7 p.m., Peninsula Hotel Rigodon Ballroom. Presented by Bangko Pangasinan Inc. in cooperation with St. Francis of Assisi College System, Herway and Sunspring Printing Corp., the concert also features Rico J. Puno as special guest and Homer Flores as musical director. "My Heart's Love," will feature some of the hits from Ivy's six albums, some of her festival-winning songs and her new sound in 2005. Other sponsors are Johnny Air, Jesi Mendez, Arnel Palomares, Alma Roa, Arsenio Café, ABS Herbs and Prudential Life Insurance Co. For inquiries, call Girlie Buendia, 776-9359, 823-2974, 0917-9011333, 0920-8475577 or 0918-9238459.

Kyla in 'Pwr f Luv' at Music Museum

KYLA ended 2004 with a successful solo concert at the Araneta Coliseum. Prior to that, she was named "Female Artist of the Year" by radio station 93.1 RX.

KYLA

Indeed, as the title of her album suggests, Kyla (real name: Melanie Calumpad) is "Not Just Your Ordinary Girl." Last Nov. 12, 2004, she starred in a concert with Regine Velasquez at the 17,000-seat Araneta Coliseum. It was a resounding success, prompting Regine to dub Kyla as the new "concert princess."

Last month, the concert, also called "Not Just Your Ordinary Girl," was aired as a two-part special on GMA 7. Guests included Gary Valenciano, Ogie Alcasid, Nyoy Volante, Keith Martin, Luke Mejares and Martin Nievera.

Kyla is now preparing for a concert series and a bar tour.

Meanwhile, her album, under the EMI/Polyeast label, is said to be "a few units away from the platinum mark." It contains 15 tracks, including several revivals. Kyla's version of the Michael Jackson hit, "Human Nature," has been getting good airplay.

Next month, Kyla will be Ogie Alcasid's guest in his Valentine shows, "Pwr f Luv" on Feb. 13 and 14, 8 p.m. at the Music Museum.

Other forthcoming engagements are the 30th Foundation Day of the Delos Santos College of Health Professions at the Amoranto Stadium, Feb. 19 and a show at the Zirkoh Bar on Timog Avenue, Quezon City, Feb. 23.

Together with Jerome John, Kyla will sing the theme song of "Let the Love Begin," a GMA Films project that opens on Feb. 9.

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THE MAKING OF 'PHANTOM OF THE OPERA'

Fate and good timing

STAGE FRIGHT. Christine (Rossum) is thrust into the spotlight after the fiery diva walks out

FILMMAKER Schumacher

SCARED, SCARRED. Christine and her "angel of music"

SHOW TIME

HIS voice calls to the innocent chorus girl Christine Daae (Emmy Rossum of "The Day After Tomorrow"), nurturing her extraordinary talents from the shadows of the opera house where she lives. Only ballet mistress Madame Giry (Miranda Richardson) knows that Christine's mysterious "angel of music" is actually the Phantom (Gerard Butler), a disfigured musical genius who haunts the catacombs of the theater, terrifying the ensemble of artists who live and work there.

When temperamental diva La Carlotta (Minnie Driver) walks out in the middle of a dress rehearsal for the company's latest production, the theater's eager new managers (Simon Callow and Ciaran Hinds) have no choice but to thrust Christine into the spotlight.

Her mesmerizing opening night performance captivates both the audience and the Phantom, who devotes himself to casting his protégé as the opera's next star. But he is not the only powerful man to be awed by the young soprano, as Christine soon finds herself courted by the theater's wealthy patron, the Vicompte Raoul de Chagny (Patrick Wilson)).

Christine is undeniably drawn to the dashing Raoul, enraging the Phantom and setting the stage for a dramatic crescendo in which soaring passions, fierce jealousies and obsessive love threaten to drive the fated lovers past the point of no return.

This year , Andrew Lloyd Webber, filmmaker Joel Schumacher and Warner Bros. Pictures present "The Phantom of the Opera," the film adaptation of Lloyd Webber's celebrated stage musical. Based on Gaston Leroux's novel of the same title, Lloyd Webber's musical phenomenon is the highest grossing stage or movie production in the world, having garnered worldwide box-office receipts of more than $3.2 billion.

Since its debut in London's West End at Her Majesty's Theatre on Oct. 9, 1986, the musical has reached an estimated audience of 80 million people. More than 65,000 performances of "Phantom" have been staged for theatergoers in 18 countries around the world. Productions of "Phantom" have earned over 50 major awards, including three Oliviers, seven Tonys, seven Drama Desk Awards and three Outer Critic's Circle Awards.

The first Broadway production of "Phantom" opened at New York's Majestic Theater in January of 1988, and the musical has since gone on to become the second-longest running musical in Broadway history (after Lloyd Webber's "Cats"), playing to more than 10.3 million people. Current productions on Broadway at the Majestic, in London at Her Majesty's and the US tour continue to set records, thrilling audiences and garnering critical acclaim.

No. 1 cast album

Released in 1987, the musical's original cast recording, featuring performances by Michael Crawford as the Phantom and Sarah Brightman as Christine, is the biggest selling cast album of all time, having sold over 40 million copies. It was the first cast album in British musical history to enter the charts at No. 1, and has since earned gold and platinum status in both the UK and the US.

"Andrew's [Lloyd Webber's] version presents the Phantom as more of a tragic lover and a sensitive romantic, not just a creature of horror to be feared," Schumacher observes. "He also made the Phantom's relationship with Christine much more of a love affair than it is in the original story."

"Phantom is a very personal piece in my career," says Lloyd Webber, who is also the producer-composer of "Jesus Christ Superstar," "Evita," "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," "Starlight Express," "Aspects of Love" and "Sunset Boulevard." He is also the recipient of seven Tonys, three Grammys, a Golden Globe and an Academy Award (for "Evita").

After taking "Phantom" to Broadway in 1988, Lloyd Webber approached Schumacher about helming a film version of the musical, having been impressed by the director's blockbuster vampire thriller "The Lost Boys."

"I thought Joel had an incredible visual sense and his use of music in the film was exceptional," Lloyd Webber recalls. "One of the great joys of collaborating with Joel is that he has a great ear for music; he really gets it, he understands how the music drives the story."

In the wake of his divorce from "Phantom" star Sarah Brightman, the singer-actress who originated the role of Christine and served as Lloyd Webber's muse during the creation of the musical, the composer decided to postpone production of the film. At various stages in the years following, Lloyd Webber asked Schumacher to collaborate on the adaptation, but the filmmaker was unavailable, busily directing a diverse array of hit films including "Batman Forever," "A Time To Kill," "The Client," "Falling Down" and "Phone Booth."

Different genres

Fate and good timing finally collided in December 2002, when the old friends met for dinner in London and Lloyd Webber proposed they join forces to launch the long-awaited production.

"I had just done a series of gritty, more experimental films than the mainstream blockbusters I'd been associated with in the past," Schumacher says of his films

FATE/2

'40s bombshell Virginia Mayo dies in nursing home

VIRGINIA MAYO in "The Girl from Jones Beach" with Ronald Reagan

LOS ANGELES—Virginia Mayo, the sultry blonde who epitomized Hollywood glamour in the 1940s and 1950s in roles opposite stars such as Bob Hope and James Cagney, has died at the age of 84, reports said Monday.

Mayo, one of the biggest stars of the final years of Tinseltown's golden era, died in a Los Angeles-area nursing home of pneumonia and heart failure following a long illness, according to the Los Angeles Times and Hollywood Reporter.

Mayo, who acted in more than 50 movies, was best known for her turns opposite Cagney in the 1949 crime drama "White Heat," as the errant young wife in William Wyler's "The Best Years Of Our Lives" (1946) and opposite Danny Kaye in the 1947 classic "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty."

The star, who was born in St. Louis in Missouri in November 1920, also starred in "Captain Horatio Hornblower" with Gregory Peck and opposite future US president Ronald Reagan in "The Girl from Jones Beach" (1949).

MGM discovery

The daughter of a newspaper reporter and his wife, Mayo was performing in a Broadway revue when she was spotted by a talent scout for Metro Goldwyn-Mayer and was put under contract by mogul Samuel Goldwyn.

She got her first movie break in 1943, an uncredited role in "Follies Girl."

Later that same year, she captivated Tinseltown bosses with her role in "Jack London."

Following a slow rise to fame, her sultry blond look and leggy physique soon made her a hit at the studio and with audiences, culminating in her rise to stardom in "Walter Mitty," the story of an accountant's irrepresible imaginary life.

Her greatest role was as Verna Jarrett, the wife of gangster Cody Jarrett—played by Cagney—in "White Heat," but she may be best remembered for the musicals in which she starred.

B-movies

Mayo went on to appear opposite some of the greatest leading men in cinema, including Rex Harrison in "King Richard and the Crusaders," Paul Newman in "The Silver Chalice," Robert Stack in "Great Day in the Morning," Bob Hope in "The Princess," and Kirk Douglas in "Along the Great Divide.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Mayo won roles mostly in B-movies, including westerns and adventure films, but also in some musicals.

She remained active as an actress in television roles through the 1980s and 1990s, taking guest roles in such hit shows as "Murder, She Wrote," "The Love Boat," and "Remington Steele," opposite Pierce Brosnan.

The actress, who spent much of her time painting during her final years, had been hospitalized for some time before her death, according to her official website. *AFP*

HK critics honor '2046' actors, pick animated film as year's best

HONG KONG—Hong Kong director Wong Kar-wai's "2046" was awarded top acting honors by local movie critics, while the animated film "McDull, the Pineapple Bun Prince" was named Best Movie of 2004.

The stars of "2046"—Tony Leung and Zhang Ziyi—won Best Actor and Best Actress awards in the annual honors list announced by the Hong Kong Film Critics Society.

The movie is the much-anticipated follow-up to Wong's award-winning "In the Mood for Love," which portrays the relationship between a man, played by Leung, and a woman who discover their spouses are a secret couple.

Leung has the same role in "2046" and Zhang, who starred in "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," plays Leung's lover.

But the top movie award went to an animated film for the first time—"McDull, the Pineapple Bun Prince," which the critics praised for its portrayal of old Hong Kong, in a statement on the society's website Tuesday.

Derek Yee won the Best Director award for "One Nite in Mongkok," the story of a prostitute and assassin who cross paths in Hong Kong.

Gordon Chan and Chung Kai-cheung clinched the best script prize for the suspense thriller "A-1 Headline." *AP*

FILMMAKER Wong (in shades) with the other choices of the Hong Kong Film Critics Society